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ABSTRACT

A study traced the establishment and implementation of the Reading Recovery program on the North Coast of New South Wales (Australia) in 1991. Teachers at the 12 schools involved in the program, key personnel at the New South Wales Department of School Education and the Catholic Education Office, and the Reading Recovery Tutor were interviewed. Reading Recovery teachers kept journals and completed short surveys at the beginning and end of the year. Results indicated that: (1) the impetus for undertaking Reading Recovery was the concern by schools about children not mastering basic skills; (2) schools anticipated immediate benefits from the program; (3) by the end of term one, the majority of the teachers were enjoying working with individual children; (4) children who had been withdrawn and non-participative at the beginning of the year were confident, participating members of their class performing at or above average; (5) only one of the six teachers who combined their classroom role with that of Reading Recovery was prepared to continue in the program; however, all of the teachers who had not carried classroom responsibilities in addition to their Reading Recovery duties intended to remain in the program. Recommendations include thoroughly assessing the school need for Reading Recovery; opening the Reading Recovery teaching position to applications from all staff; and concerted support for the Reading Recovery teacher. (Contains five tables of data and 12 extracts from teachers' journals; a sample teaching load (consisting of teacher comments on four students) is attached.) (RS)

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Changing Lives

Report of the Implementation of the Reading Recovery Program on the North Coast, NSW
1991

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December, 1992

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Introduction

What is Reading Recovery?

Reading Recovery is an individualized early intervention literacy program developed in New Zealand by Dr Marie Clay during the late 1970's. Since then it has been refined into a specialized literacy teaching program for young children, accompanied by an in-service training course for teachers. The success of Reading Recovery has resulted in its rapid expansion around the world. The program currently operates throughout New Zealand and in parts of the USA, Canada, Britain and Australia (Shoppen, 1992, p.11).

Reading Recovery targets children who, after their first year of schooling, experience difficulties with reading and writing. Clay (1990, p.61) explains that the Reading Recovery program *allows for extra help to be given to those few children who are starting to get left behind in any beginner literacy program after one year of quality instruction in a good classroom program.*

The success of Reading Recovery as a 'catch up' program has been extensively documented. A study by Clay (1990, p.61) reporting the results of annual surveys conducted by the New Zealand Department of Education concluded that following the successful implementation of Reading Recovery, *Across (New Zealand Education) Boards and across time the mean percentage of children needing longer-term help is at or below 1% of the birth cohort.* Longitudinal studies conducted by Clay (1981) and Pinnell (1988) have found that the increased reading achievement levels of children discontinued from Reading Recovery are maintained after a two to three year period.

Reading Recovery is a distinctive program. It is most comprehensive, encompassing a year long teacher development in-service course, specific teaching procedures and recommended literacy materials. It is not a packaged program to be purchased from a book store or Education Resource Centre. Rather, it is a system wide intervention program which must be conducted by a trained Reading Recovery Tutor. The emphasis of the program is on long term teacher development and it is this aspect of the program which distinguishes it from other remedial programs.

The key to the program, and the major investment is teacher knowledge and skill. (Pinnell, 1990, p. 19).

The in-service course

The Reading Recovery Tutor works with a selected group of teachers, training them in the teaching procedures of Reading Recovery. This training occurs on the job in the Reading Recovery teachers' schools and at the in-service centre where the teachers meet fortnightly. In their schools the teachers work with four children for two hours per day for between twelve and twenty weeks. Each child is taught individually for thirty minutes per day. The Reading Recovery lessons are tailored to meet the child's individual literacy needs. Pinnell (1990, p.18) describes that during *the daily lessons the children are immersed in reading and writing as they simultaneously learn to use a range of skills in a purposeful, integrated way.* The Reading Recovery teacher aims to accelerate the child's literacy progress so they can 'catch up' to their peers in the regular classroom setting when they are successfully discontinued from the program.

The introduction of Reading Recovery on the North Coast

During the 1980's, information about Reading Recovery filtered across the Pacific from New Zealand to the North Coast of NSW. Several schools in Lismore and Grafton became interested in the potential of early intervention as a method for alleviating literacy problems in their schools. The groundswell of interest in this 'new' program gradually increased until in 1990 action was taken by a small school in Grafton. Following a visit to this school by the Reading Recovery Director of Victoria the demand for Reading Recovery on the North Coast was cemented.

This report traces the establishment and implementation of the Reading Recovery program on the North Coast. The foci for this study are the schools and the implementation process, rather than the learning outcomes of the children, as such results have been reported in great detail elsewhere (Clay, 1985, 1990). The authors have drawn on the experiences of the teachers and schools who implemented the Reading Recovery in 1991. The report identifies and discusses issues of interest and concern raised by the participating schools.

Wherever possible, the participants' own words have been used to convey the issues. The writers hope that this information will be of value to other schools considering the adoption of the Reading Recovery program.

Design and procedures of the study

The twelve schools involved in the implementation of the program during 1991, along with key personnel in the two education systems (NSW Department of School Education, and the Catholic Education Office), and the Reading Recovery Tutor, were the sources of the information.

The data on which this study is based was collected at different stages during the year in the form of interviews, surveys, and journals. Table A summarises the process. The interviews were semi-structured, such that people were asked a common core of questions while flexibility allowed for individual explorations, depending on responses given.

The three key persons in each of the twelve schools (Reading Recovery Teacher, Principal, and Assistant Principal/Infants) were interviewed twice during the year, first in March and then again in late November/early December. This provided a total of sixty nine interviews (three persons were unable to be interviewed due to their illness at the time). These interviews, lasting on average 30 minutes, were taped for later transcription. (One teacher chose not to have the interviews recorded, so a written record was made.)

In mid-year (early August), twenty four Year One teachers who had had children discontinued from Reading Recovery were interviewed, again on tape for later transcription. Questions asked focussed on the teachers' perceptions of the children prior to and after discontinuing from the program.

In early December, within weeks of the end of the school year, the Reading Recovery Tutor, and the two key personnel from both education systems were interviewed.

During the year, the trainee Reading Recovery teachers kept journals which they regularly updated at each in-service session. This data was utilised.

Short surveys were sent out to all teachers in the participating schools at the beginning and end of the year. The questions were designed to collect data on teachers' knowledge of the program and their expectations and later their experience of its implementation. Although not analysed in detail for this report the data formed a valuable overview of each school's experience.

Table A
Schedule of Data Collection

Key Personnel	Early 1991	Mid 1991	End 1991
Interviews			
Twelve schools			
Reading Recovery Teacher	•		•
Principal	•		•
Assistant Principal (Infants)	•		•
Year One teachers with Reading Recovery pupils		•	
NSW Dept of School Education key person			•
Catholic Education Office key person			•
Reading Recovery Tutor			•
Surveys			
To each school	•		•
Journals			
Reading Recovery teachers	•	•	•

Processing the Data

In order to facilitate an analysis of the large body of data collected, the transcribed material was entered into a computer program called NUDIST (Non Numerical Data Indexing, Searching and Theorising). This enabled firstly a method of categorising the data and then exploratory searching of the many nodes at which the data had been indexed. The findings documented in the following chapters emerged from this process. Chapter 1 drew on the inteviews conducted with the personnel from the Education Systems and the Reading Recovery Tutor in early December; Chapters 2, 3 and 4 drew on the interviews held during March and early April with the key school personnel; Chapter 5 drew on the Year One teachers' perceptions gathered during July and August; and finally, Chapters 6, 7 and 8 drew on the interviews held in late November/early December.

Table 1.1

Planning for Reading Recovery - 1990 Timeline

1990	STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS
MAY	• Joan Smith, Victorian Reading Recovery Director presented Reading Recovery information sessions at Grafton and Lismore. 140 educators attended.
JUNE	
JULY	24 • Reading Recovery Steering Committee formed with representatives from North Coast Dept of School Educ'n, Catholic Educ'n Office and UNE-NR • Support for the establishment of a Reading Recovery program expressed by all parties
AUGUST	20• Steering C'tee prepared a joint funding submission requesting support for North Coast Reading Recovery from the NSW Dept of School Educ'n • Advertised for a Reading Recovery Tutor in New Zealand and Australia • Prepared itinerary for leading NZ Reading Recovery co-ordinator, Barbara Watson's visit to North Coast
SEPTEMBER	5 • Barbara Watson visits Lismore. Briefing session presented to Regional Directors from Dept of School Educ'n and Catholic Educ'n Office • Public lecture to over 100 teachers at Lismore 14 • Steering C'tee meeting, 14 schools expressed interest in involvement in Reading Recovery in 1991
OCTOBER	11• Steering C'tee meeting. Funding proposal from NSW Dept rejected. 25• Steering C'tee meeting. • Funding for Reading Recovery Tutor confirmed as a jointly funded project by the North Coast Dept of School Educ'n and Catholic Educ'n Office
NOVEMBER	22 •Steering C'tee meeting. • Applications invited for Reading Recovery from North Coast schools
DECEMBER	• Reading Recovery Tutor accepts position • 12 schools selected for Reading Recovery in 1991 pilot program

Chapter 1

The Planning Phase 1990

The introduction of Reading Recovery stemmed from the interest of North Coast teachers in the Program. Interest in this program had developed in the North Coast region over a number of years. However, the main impetus for the introduction of the program arose during the middle of 1990. The timeline presented in Table 1.1 highlights the six months of planning and preparation culminating in the introduction of Reading Recovery to the North Coast in February 1991.

Interviews conducted with senior members of the Department of School Education and the Catholic Education Office North Coast region provided information for this chapter. The following comments from these key personnel explain the introduction of Reading Recovery stemming from a level of grassroots interest among teachers.

> We were really involved with Reading Recovery because of the groundswell of feeling and thinking about Reading Recovery that came from teachers. That crystallised in a visit from Joan Smith back in 1990 when the Catholic Education Office invited her up and invited some of our schools to Grafton and then we put on an extra day here at Lismore. There were a lot of schools represented but it was when Joan talked to us that I could see that we not only needed schools feeling that this was good, but a systemic commitment from our own region.

Strong support shown for Reading Recovery was identified by both government and non-government systems.

> From there there was a groundswell about Reading Recovery. Not from the system but from people within the system. Remembering that now after something that was very hurriedly put on we had in attendance at both the in-services, ... sixty at South Grafton and another thirty or so at Lismore. So close on a hundred people attended the talks by Joan Smith. At that point we thought - yes, it would be a good thing to do but we pretty much put it in the too hard basket. However teachers came at us from both systems.

The North Coast Department of Education and the Catholic Education Office considered the costs involved in establishing a Reading Recovery program for their separate education systems.

> The costing was prohibitive as an individual system. We were looking at training a tutor. We were looking at sending someone to New Zealand because we discovered that they weren't going to be trained in Victoria this year. We were looking at allocating every school with .5 to be able to do it and we came up with a figure something like three hundred thousand dollars in the first year which would then grow as more schools came on and so on. Now at that point I think it was put into the too hard basket because of the costs involved and so on.

Both systems recognised that the strong demand for Reading Recovery from within the North Coast region warranted the consideration of a joint initiative.

Formation of a Steering Committee.

A Steering Committee was formed with representatives from both systems to investigate the feasibility of establishing a joint co-operative program.

The Committee consisted of seven people

- A senior representative of the Department of School Education
- A principal from a Departmental school
- A teacher from the Departmental system familiar with Reading Recovery
- A senior representative of the Catholic Education Office
- A principal from a Catholic systemic school
- A teacher from a Catholic systemic school familiar with Reading Recovery
- A lecturer from the University of New England-Northern Rivers

Initially, the Steering Committee investigated the possible inclusion of the North Coast region in the 1991 NSW pilot of Reading Recovery, funded by the New South Wales government. It was determined that this was not feasible as the regions for that trial project had already been selected. The Committee then considered locating possible funding sources from within the North Coast region.

Before funding could be secured the Committee sought to determine the level of support for Reading Recovery within North Coast primary schools. In order to disseminate information about Reading Recovery the New Zealand Director of Reading Recovery, Ms Barbara Watson was invited to the region. She presented several information sessions to various audiences thus enabling the Steering Committee to gauge the level of interest in the program from within the region.

> I invited all cluster directors, the Assistant Director General (Region), the directors from Regional office and all the hierarchy from Catholic Ed Office to a luncheon. So we were hitting schools and raising awareness and understanding and commitment and getting a systemic commitment we hoped from senior officers and raising awareness of individual teachers.

Following the meeting with the directors of the region, Barbara Watson addressed a meeting of one hundred interested teachers. Barbara Watson's visit consolidated the systems' commitment to the program. A high level of interest in Reading Recovery was expressed at all levels of the Education Departments so funding arrangements between the systems were drafted.

Employment of the Reading Recovery Tutor

The next step in the planning process was to employ a Reading Recovery Tutor for the region. The Steering Committee drew up an advertisement which was placed in the national newspapers and in the New Zealand press. Several expressions of interest were received and a Tutor from Victoria was interviewed. The employment of the Tutor was arranged between the systems.

> When we offered the Tutor the position she was approved by the Department of School of Education. There's lots of reasons for that. The fact that she worked for the Ministry of Education in Victoria and she took leave without pay and then she worked for another government department. So it's all worked out really well because it was certainly the best way to go rather than put her onto a separate contract that was completely isolated from any system. We had to sit down and work out an agreement. That took quite a while to do because of the bureaucracies in those sorts of things. So at that point probably on the last week of term last year, second last week of school, she was actually offered the position and she accepted the position on the Wednesday of the last week and at that point we were up and running.

Selection of the schools

The final step in the establishment of the North Coast Reading Recovery Project was to select the twelve schools who were to be involved in the first year of the program. Expressions of interest were sought from schools by both systems. Due to funding arrangements seven Departmental schools and five Catholic schools were selected for involvement in Reading Recovery during 1991.

> Now of course there were lots of questions from schools. How can we do this? We can't do it and so on. We eventually, in our system and I guess we should just talk about that, we got five schools and we thought that was all we could get because the Tutor had said that she could only train twelve people. We felt because of the size of the systems we would have some, and the other system (would have) seven schools. So we got our five schools and that was fine. We were up and running and we got the schools by expressions of interest forms. They wrote back indicating who they had and so on.

The Department of School Education requested that schools nominate themselves for involvement in the program. It was with a certain amount of haste that these final arrangements were concluded.

> At the end of that year we had to fairly quickly inform schools that we were going to commence and that we wanted expressions of interest and I think we didn't quite have all the information we needed to let schools know all the details. Some of the particular concerns early this year, were - Who should be the Reading Recovery teacher.? - Have we got the full commitment of our .5 of a position? . . . . Some schools weren't just sure at that stage. So we didn't quite have all that data together when we sent it out last year but we were able to get twelve schools that said: 'Yes, we're committed we want to be part of it.'

The Reading Recovery Tutor arrived in the region in January 1991. The preparation for the project was largely completed without her input as she describes.

> Well I guess a lot of the planning was done before I actually arrived. The selecting of schools and teachers was something that I picked up when I started working. Well, it was a bit disconcerting to know that they'd been done but I understand that it had to be done to get it started. I was really pleased that it was on the way but I had a lot of concerns about what had happened in that time.

Conclusion

The Reading Recovery project began in February 1991 following a period of six months of preparation by the two major Education systems of the North Coast region. The Steering Committee was dissolved during Term 2 of 1991 once the program was fully established in the region. The management of the program was then subsumed by the Tutor and senior representatives from the Department of School Education and the Catholic Education Office.

Chapter 2

Becoming a Reading Recovery School

Who were the schools

The twelve schools who had been able to access resources in order to apply and who then were selected to undertake the Reading Recovery program came from the area of the North Coast bounded by Grafton to the south and Tweed Heads to the north, a distance of some 250 kilometres. As indicated below they varied in size from under 300 to over 400 pupils.

Number of pupils in the school	Number of schools
under 300	3
300-400	4
over 400	5

Reasons for Involvement

The widespread recognition by schools that they had children who were getting through the system without mastering the basic (reading and writing) skills was a powerful impetus for becoming involved with the Reading Recovery pilot program.

As Principals reported

> Every year one of the big concerns for the Principal and the staff of any school is catering for children, particularly upper primary children. It gets increasingly difficult to cater for children who are behind in the language arts areas, reading in particular. If we can reduce the number of children by catering for children better at an earlier age and perhaps eliminate a large proportion of these children coming through the system, we are that much better off I think.
>
> (A teacher suggested) that it was something our children needed. It (Reading Recovery) appears to suit the needs of the school, it may solve the great problems we have, especially in the senior school, in the large number of children in most classes having difficulty with

> reading. Therefore, if we consider it in that light, it may be to a number of children's advantages.

Schools had tried various special programs which they felt weren't providing a solution.

> (We) have funded some special programs for children and we found the difficulty was that there wasn't a structured set of programs. We were more or less floundering in the dark in trying to determine the children's needs and assess them and then devise individualised programs for them. It wasn't cohesive, it wasn't continuous, and it was a bit piecemeal, so we're looking for something that's more structured.

One of the strong attractions of Reading Recovery was as an early intervention program. Working to remedy difficulties early on was seen as much more effective 'than trying to fix the problem after the children have had years and years of negative (experiences) about education, about learning'.

> I have always believed if you can identify and remediate early then you don't have those problems as they come through. I do believe reading is one of the basic things because even though some children have trouble with mathematic concepts, if they can't read it stymies in all sorts of areas.

How Reading Recovery was funded

Reading Recovery requires a staffing allocation of at least .5 of a teacher's work load to program and teach four children for thirty minutes per day and to attend a half day in-service session once per fortnight. Additional funds are required to purchase the necessary books, teacher texts and office equipment when the program is initially established within a school

The North Coast Reading Recovery Pilot project was funded by the North Coast region following an unsuccessful application to the NSW Department of Education for State Government funding. The region arranged the allocation of funds to introduce the program to the North Coast, funding the salary of a trained Reading Recovery Tutor and the establishment of a training centre at the Summerland Educational Resource Centre in Lismore. Schools participating in the program were required to commit their own staffing allocation and funds for the necessary establishment expenses. These funding arrangements are detailed by a representative from one of the two education systems.

> We worked out then that if we didn't have to train someone what we would do. We decided that we would not support schools directly by supplying relief time. We would be saying to schools that they had to make their own commitment to the whole program but that we would cover the resourcing of the program and the funding of the tutor and the costs involved there. We would give some assistance with that. So we looked at what that was going to cost us and we then went to the Diocesan Education Board and North Coast Department of School Education and we both got the okay from our systems to proceed.

According to the Victorian trained Reading Recovery Tutor, these regional and school based funding arrangements are comparable to other states across Australia.

> In Victoria there is no funding to release a teacher from the school. In Canberra I don't think there's any funding and in Sydney, in the implementation year last year some of the teachers were released, but apart from that there hasn't been any support as far as staffing goes.

In fact, the resourcing allocation required from within a school's budget was identified as evidence of a school's commitment to the Reading Recovery program.

> Well, (funding) hasn't been a (hurdle) for some schools because it depends on how strongly they want to make that commitment to Reading Recovery. Early intervention is the best. What programs are showing the greatest benefits? And you can't go much past Reading Recovery because the data is there.

However, the systems recognised the funding limitations as a barrier which limited the number of schools willing to become involved.

> Many (schools) expressed a real desire to go ahead. I think some found that they couldn't find the .5 staffing. In some cases because the Support Teacher Learning Difficulty allocation was in terms of a person but not in terms of days as other schools have been able to have. Finding that .5 I think has probably been the greatest difficulty.

The twelve North Coast schools implementing Reading Recovery reviewed the resource allocations within their budgets in order to identify internal funding sources. The funding arrangements determined by schools varied considerably as the following table outlines.

Table 2.2
Source of Funding

SCH NO.	NUMBER OF PUPILS	SUPPORT TEACHER LEARNING DIFFIC'S FUNDS	FLEXIBLE FUNDING	STAFF RELEASE FUNDS	SUPPORT TEACHER LEARNING DIFFICULTIES TRAINED AS READING RECOVERY	FUNDING – SUPPORT FROM CATHOLIC EDUC'N OFFICE AND DEPT OF SCHOOL EDUC'N	RELEASE FACE TO FACE / LUNCH HOUR	OTHER
1	over 400	•					•	
2	300-400		•					
3	over 400				•			
4	over 400	•						
5	300-400	•	•		•			
6	300-400	•				•		
7	over 400	•				•		
8	300-400	•						
9	over 400		•			•		
10	under 300			•		•		
11	under 300							•
12	under 300		•					

A common source of Reading Recovery funding used by schools was the redirection of all or part of the Support Teacher Learning Difficulties staffing allocation. The following comments by a Principal explain how he was able to fully fund Reading Recovery using these resources.

> I should be able to trade off resources as I feel in terms of needs at school, no worries at all. I think that's what is happening. Without the cluster director we would have been stuck this year because we were contracted to employ a Support Teacher Learning Difficulties person in the second half of year, (which) meant I wouldn't have been able to go into Reading Recovery. That contract was drawn up 18 months ago prior to Reading Recovery in this mode . . . . (So) . . . . . . The resources entirely came from the Support Teacher Learning Difficulties allocation which was .5 of a teacher. We sought and had granted to us 101 teaching days in lieu of a permanent position for that particular role. And that was immediately transferred over to Reading Recovery, that was 101 days a year so that gave us the half day release that we wanted. Equipment wise the school was already well supported in materials and in accommodation.

Other schools used a combination of funds and teacher release arrangements to establish Reading Recovery.

> When the teacher made the commitment we discussed that she'd have to give up some time; Scripture, part of her lunch hour, she would probably lose her release from face to face teaching time and I made that clear that it was an expectation. I guess it was a bit of a test in a sense. If she wasn't happy to do it, to give up any of her time, then I guess she wouldn't have been the appropriate person to have, but she was willing to give up her time.
>
> We then asked the staff, I put the bottom line to the staff, if I couldn't organise it any other way would they be prepared to give up some of their face to face release time to help out and that was moving into an industrial area, there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing on that one. It wasn't something I'd normally ask staff to do but if we had to nab a bit of time the staff did give their commitment. We've been able to work around a supplementary staffing formula and that's been working with the Learning Difficulties Teacher.

Several schools were able to internally allocate funds towards Reading Recovery from within their schools. They then requested supplementary funding from the education systems.

> I refused to be a party to it if it meant that the teachers were going to do it under very, very harsh conditions. In other words I refused to be party to it if we did not have additional staffing because you just can't do it, effectively. Everyone agreed with that and we were lucky. I found .1 (the system supplying .4). But I refused, because I've been in a lot of trialling, it is unfair to the trialling, to do Reading Recovery without the resource back-up.

Several schools utilised flexible staffing allocations and administrative staffing release in combination with other funds.

> We didn't have the numbers needed for staffing allocation. While we had expressed interest we only had .2 of a teacher available. We had a teacher's aid working .2 last year and I gave up .1 of my admin time and they (the Education system) came across with .2.

Most schools were able to commit the necessary funds to Reading Recovery for the full year. However, as one Principal described the funding arrangements decided upon at his school fell short of the requirements. This contributed to a feeling of uncertainty as to the outcome of the program.

> We knew so little about it and I understood so little about how it would be resourced, what was involved . . . . Now in week

> three (of Term 1 1991) we discussed the fact that we had the Resource Teacher we anticipated having for one term this year and additionally, because we had made submission for a program very similar to Reading Recovery, we were also allocated a resource of fifty relief days. Now the two of those only will take us three quarters of this year in the Reading Recovery Program and I'm still seeking additional support through the Cluster Director for this, now we don't have enough resource at the moment and I know the class teacher involved in this, she is not happy to have an additional teacher coming in third term. Now that is the only way though that at this stage we can manage to get this project under-way.

Two schools identified Reading Recovery as falling within the realm of the Support Teacher Learning Difficulties duties. They chose to train their Support Teacher as a Reading Recovery Teacher.

> Reading Recovery's been staffed this year by our Support Teacher Learning Difficulties and she has three days a week here and we've given her all that time over to her to allow her to attend the training programs in Lismore and then run the program back in our school

How the schools learnt about the program

Mapping the spread of knowledge about Reading Recovery in the different schools as interest developed during the year prior to the pilot provides a variety of profiles.

Background knowledge and prior experience

In five of the schools there was already someone on staff who was familiar with the program either through having recently taught in the Riverina region where Reading Recovery has been in place for some time, or who had been in contact with a teacher from that area, or who had trained as a teacher in New Zealand. In all cases, this first hand experience provided very positive recommendations about the value of the program and was often the impetus to explore further.

Staff from a third of the schools indicated that they were familiar with the concept and the program through their own professional reading over the previous several years.

One of the schools had already implemented a program which drew on many of the Reading Recovery ideas. This had attracted three other schools in the area to visit and one Principal arranged for the staff member involved in the program to in-service his own school's infants staff.

So, as circulars about the in-services being held by Reading Recovery 'experts' and later invitations for participation in the pilot were sent out from the two systems to the various schools in the area they were received by people with quite different levels of familiarity of the program. Staff members from all schools who were to become participants in the implementation had attended one or both of the in-services conducted during 1990 and/or had someone familiar with the program come to talk to their staff.

Discussion at a School Level

One of two things happened next. In some schools these initial activities generated a lot of discussion among the staff in both informal and formal settings and a high level of information was circulated.

> And (the Infants teacher) came back (from the in-service and visit to a school with a similar program) very enthusiastic and spoke to the staff about it which resulted in one of the other teachers and the Principal going across with her the next time to look at the school and talk about what was going on and they came back and reported favourably. Then we sat down and thought about how we could organise it.
>
> To get Reading Recovery accepted, we had quite a few discussions as to what Reading Recovery was about, what it purported to do, level of children being aimed at, teachers asked a few questions..... We talked about it. I said at the outset when I took over the place here that most of our decisions will be democratic ones, involving staff in everything. If staff are not behind the decision, actions will not result in the most positive way - if they own (the) decision they know what's going on, can back it with enthusiasm or at least have knowledge of what is going on.

Other schools took a different approach. The staff members who attended the in-services may have put in a report to the executive or at the next staff meeting, but it didn't then become a topic of general discussion, and the information about the program remained largely with several individuals.

According to one Principal

> (Following attendance at the in-service) the Deputy wrote a report which I glanced at and put aside, then in August last year I attended the Primary Principal's convention and someone happened to talk about Reading Recovery in their schools and they were very enthused. Their enthusiasm got to me and I thought - 'Gee, I'd like to tap into this.' I then approached Department (and was) sent information down. We got the invitation to come in. I had to make a very early commitment so without consulting anyone at that point I said, yes count us in. We're happy to go along with it.

This view of what happened was shared by the Assistant Principal

> No (it didn't come up in staff meetings). Then I believe that because the Kindergarten teacher had expressed an interest in it after going to the in-service (the Principal) remembered that and when the opportunity came up to send someone then he said she would be the one to go (to the next in-service) since she'd expressed an interest in it. He asked another lass in Year One to go along as the additional co-ordinator person so that someone in the grade had some information as well. The next step was that he'd really made the decision and committed (us) to it as a result of him going to the in-service with the two ladies.

And the Reading Recovery Teacher

> (The Principal) said he'd just been to a conference and everyone was talking about Reading Recovery and down the track he got more information about something starting up here. It was really just between him and I and then the last day of school he said that he'd put my name down to start Reading Recovery. ... We didn't know anything about it really. We didn't know what it involved. I just knew I was accepted and the school knew that I was going to have to be off my class for .5 of the week. The staff hadn't heard anything really apart from the report the Deputy circulated. That's all really, at the beginning of the year it seemed like chaos once we found out what was involved.

Reflecting on the process

Even at an early stage in the implementation year several Principals were reflecting on the particular ways they had chosen to introduce the program into their schools. In one school where, according to the Assistant Principal it 'was the boss's decision and there hadn't been much discussion, just the fact that things were happening, most of us don't know much at all', the Principal commented

> Perhaps on reflection I've taken a too major role in setting it up, saying yes we will do it although there is no opposition from the staff that is of concern.

At another school where three of the staff had attended in-services and had reported back 'favourably', the Reading Recovery Teacher recorded that 'the staff decided to go with Reading Recovery not knowing a lot about it, just what I (and the others) could tell them about it' and because they 'were very supportive of early intervention'. The process was seen as sufficiently consultative for the Principal to reflect

> I can also see this as a good model for me as a Principal in managing to bring about innovations in the school and it's gone well, the process that we've used on this occasion by fully consulting the staff and maybe I've learnt a lesson through this that I need to do this with any innovation.

Selection of the Reading Recovery Teacher

Selection of the Reading Recovery teacher was a school based decision. The procedures used to select a teacher for the training course varied throughout the schools.

The teacher selection procedures adopted by the twelve schools could be broadly grouped into three categories

1.	Volunteer: open to all staff	5 schools
2.	Teacher self selected: not open to all staff -	1 school
3.	Appointed: selected by the school executive -	6 schools

In schools where all staff were informed about the Reading Recovery program and invited to apply for the teaching position the procedure was as follows:

> In the outset in explaining the program (to staff) it was aimed at Year One level. We went to guidelines given to us through the Education system and they said it was preferable to be an Infants teacher, with sound understanding of ELIC, a successful teacher, able to communicate with other staff, and willing to undergo an extra type of learning process. We opened it up to the staff. I had personally discussed it with the executive as to who the best person would be,

> and who would want to take it on. Luckily the person who was number one choice did offer and we accepted it.

In another school the teacher who was chosen for the Reading Recovery training program also volunteered, however, in this case other staff were not informed about the program and thus were not canvassed for the position.

> She was interested. She's had some background in IM (mild intellectual disability) teaching. She has a great interest in remedial teaching. She also has a degree in education. She is very interested for her professional development. No one else volunteered. She initially volunteered and really no one else knew about it because they hadn't taken the time to know but I don't think the Principal really had a choice. It wasn't advertised but she volunteered. She had the necessary skills she was in the right class so it seemed like a logical choice.

An Assistant Principal describes another selection procedure employed by schools, to appoint a staff member to the position of Reading Recovery teacher

> The Principal and I sat down and looked at who was the best person in the school to offer it to. She stood out by far. She uses a lot of the ELIC philosophy and principles in her teaching. Some other people are still very much influenced by other methods of teaching, say phonics, and she (the appointee) appeared most open to Reading Recovery, and would not (need to) undergo so much personally, in changing her own attitudes. She would be the person to gain most for our school.

Thus half the teachers involved in the training program in 1991 had volunteered or 'self selected', whereas the other six teachers had been selected by the school executive as being the 'most appropriate person for the job.'

Criteria used for teacher selection

Several criteria were used to select the teacher for the Reading Recovery position. All schools selected teachers with extensive infant teaching experience. This was the only common factor mentioned when the reasons why a particular teacher was chosen were discussed. The guidelines distributed by the school systems were mentioned by all schools as having been considered when they were reviewing possible teachers appropriate for the position. These guidelines were distributed during November and December 1990 by the Education systems. The selection guidelines nominated criteria to be used by schools when selecting a staff member for appointment as the Reading Recovery Teacher.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

The selection of schools and teachers for the Reading Recovery Program is based on the following criteria:

SCHOOLS

- Whole school community commitment to Reading Recovery
- Supportive executive
- Quality first year teaching
- School adopts/supports/is developing whole language approach
- Suitable quiet place
- Willingness/ability to provide material resources
- A permanent member of staff meets the criteria for teacher selection

TEACHERS

- Broad experience in K-1 area
- Knowledge of early childhood and how children learn
- Language background, preferable with some study/ELIC, Literacy 3-7 or equivalent
- Child-centred person - someone who relates will to children
- An effective communicator
- A credible member of staff
- A preparedness to take on a 2 year commitment
- An organised person who has an eye for detail, precision, exactness
- A highly motivated person
- An openness to learn - willing to model in front of peers
- An understanding of appropriate assessment procedures
- A 'together' person who thrives on hard work

A number of schools adhered closely to these guidelines. A Reading Recovery teacher details how the guidelines were used by the executive staff of her school to select her as the most appropriate person for training.

> The guidelines that came from Reading Recovery (were used). It was entirely the Principal's decision. (The position) wasn't offered to staff as such. The staff didn't know very much about the fact that a Reading Recovery teacher was being selected. The process of selection was a sheet of paper, that had all the criteria of the Reading Recovery Teacher and the Principal decided that that person was me and then approached me to ask me if I would like to do it. I was rapt. I was teaching Year One last year.......I had my degree, I had the ELIC course. The Principal thinks that's important but I don't think the Reading Recovery Tutor thinks it's so important. I was a Year One teacher, and I do have quite an interest in children

> learning language and learning to read and write. Something else the Principal thought important was the way I relate to children and I'm very big on their self esteem and feeling good about themselves and making each child learn the good things about themselves, learning to recognise those things, and learn to use those things.

Once the Reading Recovery program commenced it was noted that not all the teachers in the training program had been selected according to the guidelines.

> I had all the right qualifications, had had a lot of early childhood experience, done my degree, gone through ELIC etc and I was working with Kindergarten. The Principal had heard it should be a person from Kindergarten that had to be a full time teacher from the staff to do this. Since that's happened we've found out that that's not necessarily so. I think probably the Principal's a bit cross at that because he's reorganised the staff to a big extent and upset a couple of people at the beginning of the year so that it should operate (according to the guidelines).

In a number of schools the selection criteria were referred to but not adhered to totally. A number of other criteria were given emphasis in the selection of the most appropriate person. Several schools opted not to employ a fulltime class teacher in the Reading Recovery position due to concerns about the educational welfare of the children.

> We first thought that we would have to choose a teacher on Year One and have that teacher then working .5 on the class and .5 Reading Recovery. That really concerned me because of the disruption to the actual class of children. So in terms of our concern there, we did have a casual part time teacher who has been associated quite closely with the Infant Department and working well with the teachers and children in that department . We decided then it would be better for us for that casual teacher to take on the Reading Recovery.

Several Support Teachers were selected for Reading Recovery as funding arrangements were able to be utilised and the program was considered to fall within their realm of duties. A Support Teacher Learning Difficulties explained that in her school she was the obvious person for the job because of a number of organisational reasons.

> I think because I was the only one that wouldn't interfere with the running of the school as far as I didn't have someone else that had to cover for me. I was by myself I was doing my own thing.

The Principal agreed with the teacher's comments

> I didn't want to release a full time class teacher to do the job. I didn't want to have a shared class and I think the Year One teachers appreciate that. They wanted their class full time as well, but my first thoughts were that here is something good for our school and I still firmly believe that even though things have arisen, time constraints, relief and how can the Support Teacher be at a certain place and still have her duties covered here. But we've been able to overcome them and we are able to push on. There have been reservations in the last couple of weeks about those things, but generally the attitude certainly from me, certainly from the teacher is positive.

A number of the schools reported that they had little difficulty with the selection procedure as certain teachers had been trialling Reading Recovery style procedures during the previous year. In such schools the person was almost automatically selected for the position.

> The teacher was operational in the program. We did not have another staff member who had, and I think you have to when you are selecting, you can make it a generally open type thing. But there was no one who came forward and said 'I want to be the Reading Recovery teacher instead of the teacher', because she (the present teacher) was fully operational and she already moved into it and was operating quite effectively. There was no one else who indicated an interest in taking up that instead of what they were doing on staff and we would have been looking for someone who was attached some other way on staff and that didn't happen.

The enthusiasm of a staff member for the Reading Recovery program was frequently mentioned as a reason for the selection of a particular teacher. Conversely, the lack of interest by other members of staff also contributed to the selection procedure.

> When we found out it was a classroom teacher I lobbied staff but there wasn't anyone interested in doing it. The other Grade One teacher came along to the orientation day with the Principal. She was very interested and until then we hadn't decided who was going to do it. We came away and the Principal was saying 'it has to be you', to me. The Year One teacher said she'd support me. She said she'd like to do it next year. I made the commitment to do it, not reluctantly, but with reservations but no one else was prepared to do it.

Teachers volunteering to train as a Reading Recovery teacher occasionally mentioned personal reasons for nominating for the position such as a salary upgrading or the possibility of a more permanent teaching position

> At a staff meeting it was announced that efforts were being made to implement the program into our school and would any teachers be interested. To my knowledge no one else expressed interest. I always had, from day one when I first heard about it. I did a module last year towards my B Ed. on stress management and one section was on goal setting and I had to set short term and long term goals and two of my three long term goals were to complete my degree and to be offered a position as a Reading Recovery teacher. I guess you could say I was pushing my own wagon. I have a genuine interest in it and I wanted something more permanent, more that was mine rather than just going into (other teacher's) classrooms. I don't mean I feel possessive but I can get totally committed and totally involved with Reading Recovery.

Conclusion

A strong impetus for undertaking Reading Recovery was the concern by schools about the number of children who were not mastering the basic skills in their early years, and they saw promise in the way Reading Recovery was structured. Becoming a Reading Recovery school required a variety of decisions to be made in regard to funding and teacher selection. The schools drew upon their own resources and staffing priorities, thus no two schools implemented the program in an identical fashion. Many of the decisions made in relation to funding or teacher selection held wider ramifications for the schools. Principals need to ensure sufficient opportunity for preliminary discussion and dissemination of information to the staff if a 'whole school commitment to Reading Recovery' is to be achieved. This may be quite a lengthy process or it may be achieved quite quickly, depending on the 'philosophical readiness' of the particular school and the particular ways that funding is to be organised. The establishment of an effective communication process enabling the staff to become familiar with Reading Recovery was therefore seen to be particularly important in the lead-up to making the decision about whether or not to implement the Program. This would allow the school as a whole to 'own' its commitment to undertake Reading Recovery and establish a secure base of support for the Reading Recovery teacher.

Chapter 3

School Expectations for Reading Recovery

When interviewed early in the year, Principals, Assistant Principals/Infants, and Reading Recovery teachers expressed confidence that a variety of benefits would become evident as a result of implementing the program. At the same time they recognised that they could well expect different problems along the way, some to do with resourcing and teacher workloads, others to do with meeting the needs of older children requiring additional literacy support.

Benefits anticipated

Benefits for children on the Program

Central to all, was the anticipated benefits for the children who would participate in the program. These benefits would not only be increased reading and writing skills, but also enhanced self esteem and an enjoyment of, and enthusiasm for, reading. As Principals anticipated

> Children who at this stage are encountering difficulties are not that far below the class average, if we can bring them into the mainstream, with the skills they haven't yet developed then those children will be able to operate in the classroom. . . . children's esteem will be heightened, therefore problems associated with low self esteem in reading area will be eliminated, for example, acting out or avoidance of reading.
>
> The (benefit) I would like to see is that we have children learning happily at the school and fewer children unhappy or feeling poorly about themselves because they are not achieving in what most of us would see as the basic area of communicating.

It was seen to be a very positive strategy that the children would 'catch up' in Year One when they may as yet be 'unaware that they have got a reading problem'.

Benefits for the whole class

Children who are struggling with their academic work can often be disruptive for the class. It was hoped that implementation of Reading Recovery would result in

> Less disruption in class situations, less teacher frustration, a whole lot of good things coming through because quite often the question arises 'What am I going to do with this/that kid?' (because) while doing this (activity with the child who is struggling) the others have to be given another program, and so on.

Benefits to the school as a whole

Principals' comments reflected their long term expectations. Some were confident that the ideal was possible.

> (Next year we) won't have any problem in Year Two, and in Year Three the year after. Five years down the track (we) won't have any problems except those who transfer in. We're clinically targetting the problem. Looking for the almost complete irradication of literacy needs in this school within five years.
>
> We expect to see a benefit from (the children on the Reading Recovery program) because that will be the tail group of remedial children, we can cater for those. I also expect in four years' time to have that carry through, year by year and I expect a general improvement in reading standards.

Others preferred to focus on what they saw as a realistic prognosis.

> I feel (that we are being given) a too high an expectation of what will happen with the children. If we can get three quarters of what's been promised with Reading Recovery I will be delighted. I think we should also, at this stage, be given the expectation that some of the children aren't going to make it in terms of Reading Recovery, because I haven't yet seen the system where everybody makes it in a particular system or style or whatever.

One Reading Recovery Teacher who was already familiar with how the program was running in other regions provided a very optimistic forecast.

> It benefits the whole school in that the children that are coming up, even those that had been at risk and are having trouble with their reading, if they are on the Reading Recovery they are so confident they gain so much confidence .... and it carries over into all the

> subjects. Not only does their reading improve, everything improves, so those children will go through this school and the whole school benefits from that. Also, I think just having, what you learn by being a Reading Recovery teacher carries over, now I've spoken to the Year One teacher and she is using a lot of the things I use in Reading Recovery, she is using with children within the classroom and she is backing me up by doing the cut up sentences and things with my Reading Recovery children at other times. That carries over to other teachers as well. I have teachers who (already) come and say, 'I am having a problem with this child', they think you know everything because you are the Reading Recovery teacher, which you don't. But they say, 'I am having a problem with this have you any suggestions?',.....now there is more co-operation, I think, between teachers.

Other Reading Recovery teachers voiced similar sentiments.

> I would hope that the standard of reading and writing in the school would be lifted. These children who are at risk, we can lift them up further than we had the chance to do in the full classroom situation. (In the long term) that we as teachers are more aware of how we can help these children. That we can pick out problem areas and know how to go about it. And even in the classroom the little ideas that we pick up can be used in the classroom as well.

Professional development for all teachers

For Reading Recovery teachers there was a hope for personal and professional enhancement through involvement.

> (I expect it will) make me a better teacher. Make me more aware of the processes that the children are going through to read. I'll be more conscious of every little thing that they do and when they self correct and when they miss words and they have a go. Just more aware of how they go about reading. And also I hope it will secure a position for me. If the Department is putting money into me doing the tutorials I might be too invaluable not to employ next year and the year after.
>
> I am enjoying the challenge, I think also actually (that) sometimes in your career you need a new direction and I felt this was probably the new direction I needed, too.

In addition to the professional development benefits that the Reading Recovery teachers would experience, Principals also expressed a hope that the strategies being used in Reading Recovery would be taken up by other teachers to be used in the general classroom. In some cases it was pointed out that the

Reading Recovery teacher would need to 'show the rest of the school' what the benefits were.

> The teachers will hopefully reconsider some of the techniques that are being used and may become more aware of various techniques and, in particular, to determine the level the child is at and determine the level the child should be operating at.

> I think one of the benefits (will be) that the Year One reading class teacher (will trial the strategies) that the Reading Recovery teacher is doing. So we have the Year One teacher stretching words and we have the Year One teacher putting the boxes and putting the sounds in the words and so that those skills I think are going to be shared and be picked up, some of which are very valuable ones by the teachers of reading and I think anything that does that is wonderful.

> Benefits from Reading Recovery. Looking for spinoffs first of all that Reading Recovery teacher's success, ... then spread to the Year One class teachers and be able to take that up in the classroom first of all, then will get through the rest of school. Looking for a spread. Can't see any immediate spinoff now because the Reading Recovery teacher is going to have to show the rest of the school what benefits there are in it before we get the positive.

Perhaps because of their supervisory role in relation to the Infants teachers the Assistant Principals were particularly sensitive to the anticipated benefits to the classroom teachers. They saw the professional development potential for teachers, that the program would generate 'enthusiasm with really getting in touch with reading and writing' and making teachers 'more aware of the actual process' as well as being pleased to be part of an innovative program. If they could feel that something is 'being done for those children at risk' then it wouldn't tax their 'professionalism' so much and the fact that the children would be having this one-to-one assistance also meant the classroom teachers would be able to spend more time with the 'mainstream of kids'.

Having Reading Recovery in the school would give a sharpened focus generally to reading and language in the school.

> We can occasionally become rather blase and say we always concentrate on basic skills or we're very proud of the standards of teaching in basic skills at our school and our children do perform well. This focuses on the Reading Recovery program, it focuses on the standards of reading in our school, it focuses on children learning to use their language and for that reason, whether the

> teacher is involved directly or not, it causes all of us to look at what is going on in each class in regard to reading and language.

Problems anticipated and already experienced

Resources

Time, resources, children who will miss out, teacher workload, communicating with the staff. These were the main aspects identified as problems or potential problems for the implementation year. Finding resources and juggling the resources available in order to be able to run with Reading Recovery was identified as the major issue for Principals. This reallocation of time had various repercussions on the rest of the school programs. Having to 'wipe' all other flexibly staffed programs was seen as a high price to pay, while sometimes even this wasn't going to cover the needed allocation.

> .5 is all, is the only flexible staffing we have. So in other words we had to wipe all other programs in this school for Reading Recovery and that probably is an example of the commitment of people here to be willing to sacrifice all that to be involved in Reading Recovery
>
> If I totalled all the time, the flexible time that I've got in the school, I do not have enough for Reading Recovery and it is a concern to me that our school is no different to any other.

Concentrating resources into Reading Recovery has meant for some schools larger classes

> We have a class group of 39 and we have only got 0.4 (support) for that class group. You have to justify the benefit of one against the other and that has been very hard process for us.

Needs of older children

The main casualties are seen to be the children with specific needs in the higher grades. Staff and parents had expressed their concern to the Principals, and schools were trying to work out alternate ways to meet the need.

> Of concern also was the loss to the rest of the school of (the teacher's) services as a Support Teacher Learning Difficulties, so what we've done is asked 'a fine group of mums' if they'll undertake training and they've been through their first training session, they're going to

> resource the rest of the school and cover for Support Teacher Learning Difficulties' inability to get to them because of requirements of Reading Recovery.
>
> (Because we are) concentrating our efforts, the school's efforts in Year One it could be counter productive, or may not be. Certainly in the short term it is not going to cater for children with specific needs who are in classes beyond Year One and that does cause me some concern. The staff, the staff overwhelmingly supported the notion of going into Reading Recovery and I feel that they are making the efforts that are needed to try and compensate, all of us are. As I said I'm taking a reading group to try and help out there. There are ancillary programs that I think are going to help.
>
> The problems are implementing a new system that doesn't allow for support further down the line. There isn't back-up for children in other grades with difficulties. This year there is no support for anyone else because I'm taking up all resources and the lot is going into four children, whereas before the money went to assist thirty to forty children. So the numbers have been greatly reduced. It's a concern for all the teachers who have children experiencing difficulties in their class, whereas in the past they had some support they could rely on.

Communication difficulties

Communicating about Reading Recovery to the whole staff was sometimes anticipated as a problem whether because of a physical separation between primary and infants, or because of the lack of time of the Reading Recovery Teacher.

> The difficulty I have is the two sites the primary being divorced from the Infants campus. The teachers in the Primary aren't in the same staffroom so they won't hear the same talk and that's something we're going to have to overcome. The informal communication isn't there, and it's the informal communication that is far, far more effective than the formal.

Workload of Reading Recovery Teacher

The heavy workload of the Reading Recovery Teacher was an area of concern. While the capacity of the incumbent teacher to cope may be recognised (because of personal qualities and commitment) concern was expressed 'that it would be a problem if someone else was doing it' .

Staff acceptance of the program

In some schools there was a degree of reluctance by other members of staff to accept the value of the program. In some cases this reluctance was rooted in concern about the older children 'losing out' along with the apparently small number of Year One children who would be helped. In other schools this was perceived to result from a lack of information and misunderstandings about the program.

> I can perceive that the teachers will feel that I'm not seeing enough children: I can see the attitude of the other teachers that I'm getting paid to see five children and I can see that they feel as though I'm a Learning Difficulties teacher and I'm just not spread far enough and they probably can't really see that in the long term that the kids who are coming through won't have as many problems but it's not concerning them at this stage. What's concerning them at this stage is their class and the kids in their class and the amount of kids who just need the help.
>
> (There are) problems - (but) once the staff understands - I don't think it's Reading Recovery's fault, it would be the same for any new thing that you bring into a place, particularly when someone's released to do it. . . . . I feel lot of it is the lack of knowledge - if people don't know what's going on they feel threatened by it. With teachers - if someone is only working with another person on a one-to-one they don't think that person is working as hard as you are with thirty children. Hard for Reading Recovery teacher - draining and exacting and isolated when rest of staff don't perceive you as working.

Conclusion

Schools anticipated immediate benefits not only to the children who participated in the Reading Recovery program, but also to their Year One classes. On a longer time frame, the whole school would benefit as less and less children would be experiencing literacy problems as they moved up through the school. There would be a flow-on of skills development from the Reading Recovery teacher to the staff, especially Infants teachers, and this would benefit learning in their own class. All this would come at a 'cost' to the school, however. For some there would be a loss of other flexibly staffed programs, particularly support for the older children's problems, with implications for class teachers' workloads, for others it could well mean larger classes.

Table 4.1
Reading Recovery Program - Details of Teachers and Children

SCH NO.	SCHOOL POPULATION	READING RECOVERY CHILDREN		READING RECOVERY TEACHERS					OTHER TEACHERS ON RRT CLASS
		CHN DISCONT'D	AVER WKS ON PROG.	CLASS TEACHER	STLD	CASUAL /P.T	OTHER TEACH'G DUTIES	EXECUTIVE DUTIES	
1	over 400	2	24.1	Kindergarten .5				Yes	4
2	300-400	9	13.8			Yes			
3	over 400	5	19.6			Yes			
4	over 400	7	15.4	Yr 1 (.5)					1
5	300-400	3	17.2		.5				
6	300-400	8	12.3	Yr 1 (.5)					3
7	over 400	6	13.8	Yr 1 (.5)				Yes	1
8	300-400	6	15			Yes	Yes		
9	over 400	7	11.6	Kindergarten (.5)					1
10	under 300	6	14.6	Kindergarten (.5)					1
11	under 300	8	13.1		.5				
12	under 300	11	10.6			Yes	Yes		

Chapter 4

Becoming a Reading Recovery Teacher

In this chapter the process of 'becoming a Reading Recovery Teacher' will be described. The information has been drawn from interviews recorded with the Reading Recovery teachers during March, 1991. In addition, entries from the Reading Recovery Teachers' reflective journals have been used to voice their experiences and feelings during the early weeks of the program as they established Reading Recovery within their schools.

The Teachers

A diverse group of teachers entered the Reading Recovery training program in 1991. Six of the teachers were permanently employed classroom practitioners who taught infants classes for .5 of their teaching load. Reading Recovery duties formed the other .5 of their load. Of these six teachers, several had additional executive responsibilities. The remaining six teachers in the training group were employed in various capacities within their schools. Some were permanent full-time teachers undertaking Support Teacher roles. A number of the Reading Recovery trainees were casual part-time teachers. Their employment contracts were either solely for Reading Recovery duties or a combination of Reading Recovery and duties such as release from face-to-face teaching. The roles and responsibilities of the Reading Recovery Teachers are summarised in Table 4.1.

The 'outside school' lives of the Reading Recovery Teachers were equally diverse. The teachers ranged in age from the late twenties to the late sixties. All were experienced teachers, some being very experienced. The majority of the group were women with families and children living at home. The teachers' comments revealed that their lives 'outside school' were affected by their involvement in the Reading Recovery program during 1991.

The teachers reported an extremely busy first term as they organised the Reading Recovery program within their schools. During this term they were 'becoming' Reading Recovery teachers. Their weeks were filled with coordinating class sharing arrangements, adjusting school timetables, liaising with the Year One and Kindergarten teachers, selecting children for the program, attending the fortnightly training sessions and completing the home study requirements.

Sharing the class

The first challenge for the classroom based Reading Recovery teachers was the co-ordination of teaching responsibilities with their release teacher. In the majority of cases the Reading Recovery teachers were required to share their class with a teacher, or teachers, nominated by the school. Few of the Reading Recovery teachers were involved in the selection and employment of their co-teacher as this was largely determined by the funding arrangements adopted by the school, as described in Chapter 2.

Curriculum responsibilities were divided between the classroom based Reading Recovery teachers and their release teachers. Three of the teachers chose not to teach 'language' as they felt they would become 'stale' by teaching reading and writing all day.

> I teach Kinder and two hours of Reading Recovery till 11.15am and then I have the Kinder class. The Principal takes my class while I do Reading Recovery. We have completely separate areas but he keeps me informed so I can coordinate craft and things like that. I'm doing the maths, religion, craft, PE and music. He's doing the language, so I'm not doing the language in Reading Recovery and then going back to it again and he likes doing it. So far it's working out.

In other schools, the teaching duties and curriculum responsibilities were negotiated using different criteria, such as staff expertise. In these schools the Reading Recovery teacher taught 'language' enabling the teacher to use her developing specialised knowledge throughout the day.

> I'm the Deputy Principal and I release the Reading Recovery teacher. I take maths and music, religion, some writing, and I still read them stories. I often take a TV program with them at 10 am. The Reading Recovery Teacher takes language and art and craft and science and health, because I just mainly took morning subjects and she took the after recess type of subjects. That left the Reading Recovery teacher with the language (because) it just went across so many other areas.

In schools where class sharing arrangements were required, the teachers identified 'constant communication' and 'shared beliefs about the way children learn' as essential for successful teaching partnerships. It was expected by the teachers that if these 'essentials' were incorporated into the class sharing arrangements then the children and teachers would benefit.

> I don't see the children having any problems with sharing of the class. The benefit is that with any shared class the two teachers have to have same type of teaching style, same beliefs, and I think we have those. We have to be very careful that we communicate with each other. Discuss things we notice about children and where possible interview parents together ....We have grade meetings for programming.

Class sharing arrangements did not progress as smoothly in all schools. Several Reading Recovery teachers expressed feelings of concern about their class sharing arrangements, particularly where they were sharing the class with a number of teachers

> The problems that have arisen already were problems with my class because the way (the Principal) organised it was there are about 4 other teachers on my class. So it's not just one other person taking the lessons. The problems and concerns are with my class and how they are going to cope with lots of people.

or where they were unsure of the release teacher's expertise

> Today's my first day of feeling really good. Up to now I just felt ghastly, too much to cope doing the testing and trying to run a class at the same time because we've just started our group work and my offsider hasn't done reading with infants before. It's such a difference teaching infants to primary and my partner doesn't know anything about reading. My co-teacher is just doing the computer part of it, so I'm responsible for getting the kids to learn to read and teaching my partner. I'm going to have that job all year.

Class sharing arrangements were perceived by teachers as curtailing their contact with parents.

> The mums are the backbone of our class as helpers and now I just (have time to) say, 'it's great to see you' whereas before I could talk to them.

Locating a room and resources.

More mundane challenges were faced by several Reading Recovery teachers. Teaching space was at a premium in a number of schools so locating a quiet place to conduct the lessons proved to be an obstacle requiring creative thinking and skilful negotiation. The teachers described utilising 'old storerooms', the 'corner of the Principal's office' and other 'nooks and crannies' for their Reading Recovery centres.

Journal entry 19.2.1991

> Finding a room is a problem. I lost my room on Wednesday. The Learning Difficulties Support Teacher needs it for ten primary children. I have to move out into an adjoining space - at least there's a desk. If it doesn't work I'll be moving under a tree or something - the back seat of my car!

A shortage of suitable books was a difficulty mentioned by a majority of the Reading Recovery teachers during this initial phase of the program.

> The problem I have had is books. There is a paucity of appropriate reading books in this department and the Principal is taking steps to fix that, but there are not many books that are whole language learning, that are predictable, that are (the ones) the current educationalists say children should have.

Once these quests for a teaching space and teaching materials were completed the teachers were required to organise their teaching materials to follow the Reading Recovery guidelines. This was considered an essential, but time consuming task.

Journal entry 26.2.91

> I spent Sunday classifying my reading books into their levels. There are a lot of gaps. I contacted a supplier in Sydney about the suggested buying list.

Selection of children

As the teachers began to organise the implementation of Reading Recovery within their schools they also attended their first sessions of the Reading Recovery in-service course in Lismore. The course commenced in early February, 1991. It began with three full days spread over two weeks. This block of time was devoted to learning the administration of the Reading Recovery selection procedures. The teachers began by learning how to administer the Diagnostic Survey, the results of which would be used to prioritise children for entry into Reading Recovery.

Clay (1979, p. 16.) describes the diagnostic survey as a collection of *'techniques'* to *'enable teachers to observe children at work on the actual tasks, noting their strengths and their confusions. . . . . . . A set of standard observation procedures for recording reading and writing behaviours. . . . '*

The Tutor commented in her journal that this section of the training program was most taxing for all and she recognised the difficulties the teachers were facing.

Journal entry 19.2.91

> . . . . . most of the day was spent dealing with the diagnostic survey and summary. The summary section caused quite a few headaches as the teachers grappled with finding positive strategies from the data they had collected. The negatives also caused a few hassles. I expected this though and carefully took them through it step by step. I know they will still find it difficult but I still do too . . . . I breathed a sigh of relief when this day was over. It's a very demanding couple of weeks and almost boring to me, even though a lot of the time is spent on preparation in order to make it interesting for the teachers but I find it very dull. Now is when things really start to happening....

Once the procedures of the diagnostic survey were mastered the teachers began using the tests in their schools. The Reading Recovery teachers administered the Diagnostic survey to all children from Year One in their schools being considered for entry into the Reading Recovery program. The Year One teachers were requested to nominate children whose literacy levels were below that of the average level of the class. These children were then screened by the Reading Recovery Teacher to identify the oldest lowest level children in the first year. A Reading Recovery teacher explains how this selection procedure operated in her school.

> The Year One teachers referred the children to me. I went to see the teachers and asked them to give me a list of the children because I had to test supposedly a third of Year One. So I asked them to give me the children's names and then we did talk to the previous Kindergarten teachers. But it seems that there was only one lass here

> who was on Kindergarten last year. The other girls were on maternity leave, so it was really relying on what the Year One teachers knew of the kids.

The administration of these selection procedures was a tiring and lengthy process for both teachers and children.

Journal entry 19.2.91

> I did the full battery of tests on the children. The first one took me one hour. I wasn't very fluent in administering the tests, had to keep referring back to the instructions of what to say. My time improved over three days. I noticed that my observation and perception improved as I worked with more children......

Journal entry 26.2.91

> Brain fade/ blur/ fuzz. Goodness, gracious, it becomes a bit worrying when you can barely remember your name after a session of testing. I don't think I've ever felt so drained in my life. However, it was great to hear that everyone else was feeling the same - had a few good laughs today.

Occasional relief during the weeks of intensive testing was provided by the children's responses to the Diagnostic Survey.

Journal entry 15.2.91

> After one week of 'testing' with the children it has been interesting to record the comments and see the sheer delight on their faces especially after reading 'Sand' (A small book with purpose printed text errors for the children to detect). I was highly amused when one child told me 'You better take that book back and tell them it's wrong.'

One of the classroom teachers found the testing particularly demanding.

Journal entry 26.2.91

> (I'm) pleased the testing is over. I feel that teachers with their own class could be released while the testing is on. I found this extremely stressful - particularly with the room being painted - which entailed shifting out for two days and making do with pencils and paper only. Trying to get the parent roster up and going. Telling my replacement what had been happening before she arrived on the scene. Trying to find out what the class is doing while I am out of the room. Feeling overall responsibility for this year's first class, - Oh HELP!! However, most staff are **very supportive**, extra specially so. Really I am very lucky to have wonderful parent support.

Selection procedures questioned

The selection procedures were queried by some of the Reading Recovery teachers and executive staff. The requirements that the children be 'no older than six years of age' and be in their 'second year of school' caused the most concern. The different starting ages in NSW schools in comparison to NZ schools meant that children were generally younger at the end of Kindergarten when testing was to be carried out. Other children in Year One were older but missed out because they had been at school for more than one year (having repeated Kindergarten).

> Perhaps (the problem is that) children we wish could get on the program won't. They won't meet the criteria. Basically on age.
>
> I question the starting age - think that early Year Two would be a good time - Australian children are very young.
>
> (The Reading Recovery information) talks about the normal classroom and if we are going to have integrated children that are older in a normal classroom and you want to cater for them as well. That's got implications for the (age) six. (Also) repetition. Do we now not repeat children in Kindergarten, do we repeat them in year one? We will have to rethink what we are doing if we do put children up to Year One with inadequate social skills because we want them to take part in Reading Recovery so they are not too old then that means more support or smaller classes in Year One or different orientation to the program in Year One.

Teachers also expressed concern about the suitability of all children for the program. By selecting the 'oldest' children with the 'lowest' reading levels the teachers were concerned that this might result in a decrease in the number of children able to complete Reading Recovery.

Journal entry 14.2.91

> I feel a great deal of pressure on me as the Reading Recovery teacher. We have a large number of slow children in the school. Can children who are potentially IM/OA children really achieve to grade level?

Although the majority of the teachers reported that the selection procedures were time consuming and tiring, the teachers noticed that the testing encouraged reflection upon their own teaching methods.

Journal entry 26.2.91

> Exhausted!! The beginning of last week I felt - 'How will I ever get all the testing done? Will I miss some important points about a child?'
>
> Three days of testing. Didn't last year's Kinder teacher teach anything?! - That was ME!!! I've started to see a pattern in the weakness - there's hope yet!
>
> Fourth day - the children tested seemed to know a little more. I felt a little more confident that I was on the right track.

For some of the teachers 'becoming a Reading Recovery teacher' began to alter their classroom teaching practices.

Journal entry 26.2.91

> A week of ups and downs. Ups when I felt I had it all together and then a downer when I was brought back to earth or reality. Think I could give the Concepts About Print test in my sleep! I've been able (briefly) to reflect on my teaching methods - especially when one child after another comes with the same reversals, confusion lacking real knowledge of letter identification and also the thrusting of a pencil into a child's hand (as some do) and saying 'Write me a story'. I've come to the conclusion I need to do more modelled writing in my classroom and perhaps some more 'directed' writing.

Travelling to the training sessions

Following the initial full day in-services, regular fortnightly afternoon training sessions commenced and continued throughout the year. Each Tuesday the teachers would meet from noon until 4.30 pm. Half the group travelled for over an hour to these sessions. Travelling to and from the in-service was considered both a positive and negative aspect of becoming a Reading Recovery teacher.

> It is a long way, although it won't be too bad later on because I finish (my other outside school commitments). We don't get home until 6.30 on a Tuesday night and I have a meeting at 7.30 every Tuesday night. I have a husband who is away 6 weeks at a time and I find I hate Tuesdays, I hate the Tuesdays.

The same teacher also acknowledged the positive aspects of the travelling.

> We go over in the car, the three of us travel together and we go over in the car and we chatter, chatter and we eat our lunch as we go and

> say 'Oh, such and such happened this week and it was really great and I am really thrilled that this happened'. Coming back we are so quiet!. We are so quiet! thinking how am I going to cope with all this . . . . We purposely made sure that there was someone else in our town so that we could do that and we have and it is good.

The training sessions

The training sessions are the linchpin of the Reading Recovery Program. The structure of the sessions, like the structure of the Reading Recovery lessons, is tightly formatted.

The weekly seminar has two basic parts: (1) talking while observing, in which participants observe the lesson or lessons, talking among themselves as they do so; then (2) reflective discussion, in which participants meet with the demonstrating teacher and discuss the lesson. Both processes are led by a trained teacher leader who guides discussion, raises challenging questions, and uses the observed behaviour of the child and teacher to help the group develop skills in describing, analysing, and making inferences. (Pinnell, 1991, p.171).

The teachers offered a variety of responses to the initial in-service sessions.

Some responded with boundless enthusiasm

> I wish we'd learn more. It's at the stage I just want to really get into it. You know where you want to see everything all at once but I know I've got to take it slowly and I am just eager to get more and more, more information and let's get into more.

Others reacted to the in-services with enthusiasm tempered by fatigue

> The in-service sessions are very stimulating. I look forward to going. I love the interaction with other teachers. We all seem to have common problems and common difficulties but a load shared is easier. Everyone seems very enthusiastic and it's infectious. I come away feeling totally overloaded mentally and I don't doubt that I can fulfil my role, the only doubts I have is about the time factor. It seems that everything is so highly structured and everything is so precise and exact that I guess I'm wondering if I'm well organised enough to be able to implement it to the exact letter of how we're taught . . . . I've found it very invigorating, very challenging and

> not a little awe-inspiring, but sometimes I wonder if I can absorb and act upon everything. It is very concentrated.

Several teachers felt overwhelmed and suffered from 'information overload' following the training sessions.

Journal entry 19.2.91

> The brain is drained!#!! At the beginning of the second session I felt keen and 'ready to go'. By the end 'How can I ever learn all this and know what I'm doing?'
>
> I am really interested in seeing if Reading Recovery will work and I am just hoping it does. I sometimes get a bit overwhelmed, especially after training day. I think, 'Am I going to manage? Can I possibly do all this? ' I did get a bit bogged down when I was doing all the diagnostic surveys . . . . .

Teaching behind a two way screen

Teaching behind a two way viewing screen is a unique training method used in the Reading Recovery in-service program. The teachers are required to present three lessons behind the screen during the course of their training year. These lesson demonstrations are considered to be the most 'powerful' part of the Reading Recovery sessions. During these sessions the group observes their peers teaching a Reading Recovery lesson. The Tutor guides the teachers' observations of the lesson, questioning the teachers about the actions of the child and responses of the teacher.

In behind the glass sessions, teachers sit close to the glass. A sound system enables observers to hear the teacher and child, but the group can talk without disturbing the on-going lesson. They can see the text being read, eye and hand movements, and every detail of the teacher-child interaction. (Pinnell, 1991, p. 174)

It was not until the end of March that this two way screen facility was completed and ready for use in Lismore. The delay caused the Tutor some concern.

Journal entry 12.3.91

> Another useless in-service. No screen, no power. It's really amazing trying to get things across, even setting up the 'routine' without a screen.

Once the screen was completed the training sessions followed the Reading Recovery format. The Tutor explained the importance of this teaching method.

Journal entry 26.3.91

> At last the teachers have gone away not only exhausted but rejuvenated. They now understand what the in-services are all about and why the one way viewing screen is an essential part of the program. Behind the screen most of the teachers responded well but there was the normal conflict of trying to observe, listen and respond at the same time. There were some teachers who froze when I directed a question to them but again this will improve as they get used to working behind the screen.

For the teachers the prospect of teaching behind the screen was anticipated with anxiety.

> (I) really doubt my ability in relation to other teachers in the project.
> I'm worried about teaching behind the screen.

Journal entry 30.4.91

> I'm too nervous to think at present as I have to teach behind the screen.

A sense of achievement and great relief was expressed by all teachers once they had delivered their first session behind the screen.

Journal entry 26.3.91

> Whew!! I'll sleep tonight!! Teaching behind the screen makes you realise all the things you don't know and all you have to learn!!

Home study

In addition to the training sessions and individualised teaching, the in-service course involved extra study outside school hours. Again the teachers' comments regarding this aspect of becoming a Reading Recovery teacher were diverse.

At the beginning of the year, several teachers found the extra study a considerable pressure.

> The workload is like a burden at times. Sometimes you think 'When am I ever going to get on top of it?' At the moment I'm a little behind and if you get behind one day trying to just record a few things then I find it hard to catch up.
>
> When I go home and sit there and do all the homework, the testing and go over things and practise things, sort out book levels and then I'm too tired to go down town and buy things for it. I go to sleep and think about the ticks on running records and things. Others have said the same thing. I think it's going to become better.

while others commented that they felt the study load was reasonable

> A fair amount of work I guess, but you don't sort of notice it so much if you are enjoying it. I guess I've always taken stuff home, so it doesn't matter whether it is Reading Recovery or not. I think only having to program language, I mean (my co-teacher) is taking a whole area, that's a big workload gone, that is a big plus.

Pressure to perform

From the beginning of the Reading Recovery training program the teachers referred to feeling pressured to perform. They identified three main sources of this pressure.

Pressure from the school

> I feel a great onus on me. In classroom situation there is a realistic expectation of teachers and the public at large, that not every single child will be taught to their full potential. But when it's one-to-one and you're the so called expert, I feel a great onus on me to produce the goods. Everything we've read, and everything I've spoken to the staff about and everything the Principal has spoken about is that this (Reading Recovery) is wonderful! This is effective, it works, the children shouldn't regress like with most remedial things. From what I've read that (regression) isn't so with Reading Recovery, so I do feel a great responsibility.

Pressure from the Tutor

> At the beginning I was overawed and I was actually nearly going to pull out. I thought 'Oh, no, I can't go ahead with this. The Tutor expects so much and I'll never ever be able to do all this!' But I think I'll be all right. I was very frightened. I thought there's just too

> much work and too much, I just wasn't aware that you had to do it and I really didn't see the significance in doing it.

Pressure from themselves

> I found it very stressful to start with, getting organised and coping. I thought that it was going to relax but maybe it's not because each time I go there's more to learn. It is going to be a difficult year workload-wise for me. But my family's fairly supportive. It is a bit stressful on the family. The only personal concern is the responsibility to make it work. Reading Recovery is wholly on my shoulders to make it work.

For one of the teachers this feeling of pressure was increased by a number of other commitments.

> I feel that I just can't breathe. I suppose lots of people don't, except that I'm used to having a little bit of time. Probably because I've got children at home and I've always been able to stay back at work and do lots of work but now I can't. Its a matter of getting them organised. I really feel that if I wasn't doing the executive duties, which I really hate doing, it's totally unrewarding as far as I can see, just paper work and I get nothing from it. I don't think people in executive roles should be doing things like this or maybe it's just me. Maybe it shouldn't be people with young children at home. Maybe it shouldn't be people with a class . . . . . .

From 'Becoming' to 'Being' a Reading Recovery Teacher

By the end of term one, the majority of the teachers were enjoying working with individual children 'roaming around the known.' The initial impact of becoming the Reading Recovery teacher in their school had decreased.

> In school last week was the first time I've had the four children on the (Reading Recovery) program. In working around the known, I thoroughly enjoyed it. I love the one-to-one with the children. Learning to trust each other; I really enjoy that. (I've had) nothing but positive feedback. I phoned the children's mothers the day that the final selection was made and said 'Your child has been selected on the program. Are you happy and agreeable for them to go on the program, and I'll make an appointment at a later date to talk about it?' All (the mothers) came to see me the next afternoon to express how happy they were that their child was on the program and two of them said 'My child thinks he's so special coming.....the positive

> feelings of speciality rather that later on when children have the adverse feeling about being removed from the classroom.

Journal entry 12.3.91

> I've had a lovely two weeks 'roaming the known' with the children. The children have now relaxed working in a one-to-one situation. The children can't wait to come in! I enjoy it as much as the children do!

However, it was with a measure of relief that the teachers approached the Easter school holidays. They had completed the first stage of 'becoming' a Reading Recovery teacher by establishing the program within their schools. The holidays provided the teachers with an opportunity to relax and unwind before they continued to learn about the program by 'being' the Reading Recovery teacher.

Journal entry 26.3.91

> I'm glad it's Easter as I'm tired, but really pleased with the progress the kids have made.

Chapter 5

The Reading Recovery Children

By the end of July, twenty one of the thirty six children in the initial intake onto the program had been discontinued and were now back full time in their classrooms. (See Table 4.1 for average length of time spent on the program.) The Reading Recovery teachers were continuing to monitor their progress, their class teachers occasionally needed to remind them to use the strategies that they had learned in Reading Recovery, but overall they were successfully functioning as independent readers and writers.

To find out more about the children who were participating in the Program we interviewed the Year One class teachers of the twenty one children who had been discontinued by the end of July. We asked these teachers to describe the children's reading and writing skills, their interest levels, behaviour during reading and writing sessions as well as their general behaviour both prior to entering Reading Recovery and then after their discontinuation from the program.

The Children before entering the Reading Recovery program

Reading and writing skills

According to teacher observations the children's reading and writing skills before going onto the program had ranged from no skills whatsoever

> Dean had no reading skills whatsoever. He knew no sounds. He knew no words.
>
> Martin virtually wasn't attempting to write. He wasn't even doing the very early stages where he would attempt to write the initial sounds and put a space or a line for the rest. He would write a few letters down . . . . . that could be anything. And he would only verbalise a story under pressure . . . if you insisted that he have a go.
>
> Stephen had no idea of cueing systems that (the teacher) gone through with him - initial sounds, ending sounds, blends, he was very poor in that sense.

> Richard didn't have any strategies at all. He had a short memory. Didn't seem to be able to retain anything from day to day. He didn't have any strategies for reading. He didn't have any strategies for writing . . . . he would come and ask you how to spell a word and he could never cope with remembering going back to his place. He would lose the whole thing. You couldn't give him too many letters to cope with because his short term memory couldn't cope with it.

to some incompletely mastered skills

> (Margaret) knew approximately half the sounds so she was using that a bit to try to attack the words by sounding them out but she couldn't get it because she didn't know all the sounds and she wasn't very confident and I think that was one of her big problems as well. She didn't want to do anything and that reflected in her story writing work. It was almost non legible, you couldn't read it, it was all over the page and she'd attempt some words but she was more happy to leave it a blank and let someone else write it in for her. (She was able to write) short sentences, simple sentences with only a few recognisable words, maybe three words. Simple words like - 'I' or 'a'. She couldn't attempt to sound out any words. . . . (When she was trying to read) she'd look at the picture for some clues . . . so she'd get the general ideas of the story but when she came to read she wouldn't sort of think - oh, it starts with 'h' and then look up and see a horse, she wasn't using anything like that. Using a bit of picture clue and phonic clueing but it wasn't helping her a great deal and she'd lose the idea of the story because she was struggling over each word.

Some children were perceived by their teachers as 'slow learners', others were seen as bright and intelligent. David was one such child.

> David is very good with his hands, he's obviously a very bright child and had really good general knowledge but didn't know what to do with a book. When we were doing big book work in the class he just wasn't focussing in on the books at all. (During reading and writing sessions), his eyes would dart here and there. You know, just not focussing in at all and he couldn't even write his name. That was the stage that he was at. So he didn't know his letter names, didn't know his letter sounds, couldn't follow the text of a story and although from a book he could give you an idea of what was going to happen, he just wasn't using those clues to help him work out what the words were saying to him. Very hesitant. . . . . there just seemed to be a whole area that he wasn't homing in on, it was just like his visual perception and his auditory perception relating to words, especially written words, just wasn't there, he just wasn't relating to it at all.

Interest in Reading and Writing

No pattern emerged about a particular level of interest in reading and writing activities. Some of children demonstrated a very clear enjoyment in listening to stories at home and at school while others showed very little interest.

> Ian always did like books and he was always interested in all the stories that we read in the classroom and the big books and he was always really keen with those and so, yes I'd say he was interested in books.
>
> Peter had no interest. Even speaking to his mum, he never read books at home and didn't even like having books read to him. And in the classroom when it was time to go and choose books to read during reading time he'd just draw pictures, copy the pictures and that sort of thing.

Some children were from home backgrounds that would be characterised as 'literacy rich' and in which parents were becoming concerned that their child was not yet showing an interest in reading.

> Very early in the piece I had David's parents come up and see me. They were really concerned that David wasn't making any signs of wanting to read and knowing what reading was about, and yet they knew him to be a very active and bright child.

For others, like Stephen and Richard, literacy activities did not appear to, or could not play a very large part in their daily lives.

> Stephen's living with his grandparents. Reading isn't promoted at home so he didn't have much contact with books so therefore his reading was very poor. . . . . It's been a chore trying to get his grandparents to read with him at home. Understanding his situation at home he has gone a long way because he hasn't had that support at home which a lot of the other Reading Recovery children have had because they have their home things that they should be doing at home as well.
>
> Richard liked hearing stories read to him but he didn't have stories at home. His mum doesn't read or write, she says she's dyslexic so he had not much of an experience of reading at home. . . . . . And at school here when you read him stories he really would fiddle and look around.

Behaviour during reading and writing sessions

The children showed a wide spectra of behaviours during reading and writing tasks. Some were keen to be involved but for most, literacy lessons were a time of little class participation.

> Martin always appeared to be listening and watching, in tune but he just didn't participate verbally.

Teachers perceived children expressed reluctance in different ways. Some teachers reported the child's open aggression during reading lessons

> For the reading sessions, Dean would just roll around and kick and punch and do everything that he possibly could to avoid having to do anything. The activity was always too hard for him. He'd cry and he'd punch so he's never ever really . . . . . . I guess it's the same old thing, they really would like to but they can't, so they don't, so you never know that they really want to. They never actually come to you and say - I wish I could, but I can't. And he was always sick, always wanting to go to the sick bay and always wanting because I let them go and lie in the class library and read a book if they feel sick and he was always wanting to be in the library.

Others described literacy sessions as times of stress and tears

> Bobby was very reluctant to write at all, at writing time often it was just scribbles or a picture. When I asked him to share his story there would be tears, even tears when I wrote his story.

> It was threatening and it was putting Matthew in a situation that he couldn't control and he very often just dissolved into tears and he just couldn't handle the stress of having to do something, especially if he tried. I think there were a number of occasions where he followed the instructions on how to do something and all of a sudden it just wasn't working for him and he dissolved into tears, so there was that added difficulty there.

For another group, reluctance was expressed in quite sophisticated or evasive behaviour.

> Peter would often get a book and copy from a book so that he would appear to be doing as much as the other children but he wouldn't have any idea of whether it was a capital letter or he might even copy for instance the 'a' in the book which is different from our writing. Well, he had devised a lot of his own strategies to help him with reading so he would wait to hear what someone else was going

> to say or he would wait for someone to prompt him or he would look for help.

Classmates, Brian and Skye had very different ways of coping with a situation that was obviously very difficult for each of them

> Brian would try very hard and I think that's what frustrated him the most (that) he just couldn't put down onto paper what he really wanted to. He would try. He would sit there. He wasn't the kind that would sit and talk with his friends. He would try. I think he would be very frustrated and a bit upset because I think he would have thought, 'look at me, I must be stupid'. He tried. He would try hard.
>
> Skye was the type of person that whenever she was reading or writing she would be up next to you or up next to one of our helpers every two and a half seconds, 'Is this right? Is that right?' What's this word? What's that word?' She was basically always coming up for all the words that she wanted, but (when she went back to her seat she couldn't remember the word so) she'd come back and say - 'Is that right?'. Or if you wrote it on the board she'd go away and copy it down and even then she'd still say - 'Is that right?' She still wanted the 'Yes, that's right. You're going well'.

General behaviour

In terms of general behaviour, almost all children were portrayed as being insecure in the school setting. Children were either seen to be timid, withdrawn and generally lacking in confidence, or tending to be aggressive in their relations.

There were portrayals of children who were reluctant to speak or take part in any class activities

> Martin really wasn't a talker at all. You would say things to him and he would just use body language. He just wouldn't speak. He would speak to his friends on the playground.
>
> Peter was shy, obviously low self esteem and just from his general attitude he looked as if he didn't know where he was going or what was going on or what was happening in his life. He was very shy in the classroom and didn't contribute at all to the conversations or anything.
>
> Karin is just a very quiet little girl. She's not a behaviour problem. It just worried me that she was so withdrawn and you know, I just

> didn't seem to be able to draw her out. She was very quiet, she didn't want to get up for news or things like that.

Others, like Dean, were seen to express their insecurity through aggression

> Dean was very aggressive. He would punch at the drop of a hat. He hated school. He was very unhappy about school and aggressive as he is at school he's very sooky with mum, very 'I hate school . . . . I can't do anything' and things like that. So he was very insecure at school.

Special circumstances

Sometimes difficult circumstances at home, location changes or prolonged illness were identified as important contributing factors.

> I know that in Kindergarten Tom had made a move from Queensland to here about halfway through the year, was very upset about leaving his friends up in Queensland and he'd also been very active outside. There was the emotional problem of changing schools and Kindergarten and, yes, for every other reason he should be reading, but he just wasn't.

> Oh (Astrid was) a day-dreamer. She was in another world. You know, she had a lot of hassles (at home) and I suppose that contributes a lot to it.

The Children now they have been discontinued from the Reading Recovery program

These children spent somewhere from thirteen to twenty weeks in the Reading Recovery program. According to their classroom teachers there have been, in most cases, quite major changes in both the children's reading and writing skills and in their general behaviour, particularly their confidence and self esteem.

The changes in Peter reflect this

> Well, he's come from a really shy quiet little boy who really didn't have any place in the classroom and I'm sure he didn't want to be there, and he's sort of become a little boy who is quite happy to be in the classroom and quite confident in what he can do and in his ability to solve problems and that sort of thing as well. Before he just didn't seem to have a clue what to do in any area but he now seems to have that confidence and independence to tackle things in a much better way.

Participation in activities

Children who earlier in this chapter were portrayed as being withdrawn and low in self esteem were now actively participating in class, had made friends and appeared to be much happier. Bobby, who used to be ' very reluctant to speak' and who would 'dissolve into tears' when asked to share his story in class, was now visiting the Principal for chats, and he

> often reads stories to the boys and girls in our class. He says that he can read this story and wants to share it with everyone, so that's really something special.

Skye, who used to 'withdraw' and do anything 'to evade' having to participate

> ...... has changed just so much. She's just so happy at school, she's got a friend at last and they read the same sort of books together and it's just lovely. She's really changed, that kid. . . . . I guess she's now just a normal kid that just picks up a book. I've got no fears for her. With a little bit of nagging I think she'll just continue. She'll be an average reader I guess. I don't think she'll ever really love books as much as Astrid (her Reading Recovery classmate) does but I think she'll be an average reader and writer which I think that without this chance she would have been a struggler.

For Dean, who used to 'punch at the drop of a hat and who hated school' the change has been dramatic. He'll still give the 'occasional punch', says his teacher but overall

> Dean's just become a confident academic. He's changed from 'I can't do anything', 'I don't want to come to school', 'I hate school' to dying to get to school and 'I can do everything' and 'I'm the best in the class' kind of attitude. And he's going really well.

Reading and writing skills

All the children were perceived to have made progress in their reading and writing. Of the twenty one focussed on in this chapter, five were considered to be now among the top readers of their class, eleven were somewhere in the middle and three were below the class average (in the remaining two cases a level was not reported during the interview). Most had become quite independent readers utilising the variety of strategies taught to them in Reading Recovery. David's teacher describes in detail what she sees him doing when he comes to a word he doesn't know

> I guess one of the first things that I see him do if he comes across a word that he doesn't know is that his eyes dart to the pictures and he looks back to the words that he's already read. He'll look at the initial sound and I'm sure he looks at the shape of the word. He looks at more than the initial sound, he does the blending but the really beautiful thing that he does, and I'm trying to encourage all my children to do it, more so this year than I've ever done before because I can see the strategy behind it, is that if he's in the middle of a sentence and he comes across a word he doesn't know and he decodes it, he then automatically goes back to the beginning of the sentence and (reads it through properly).

Interest levels

The teachers commented on the keenness these children show for reading

> Bobby's beautiful to watch because at silent reading time he will sit down and be just so comfortable with (books). I said to the Reading Recovery teacher that I'd love to take photos because he and the other three (Reading Recovery children) have shown the rest of the children just how to sit down and enjoy them.

and the strategies that they now can utilise independently. In some cases the Reading Recovery children have become key members of reading groups in the expectation that their strategies and attitudes will be a model for other children in the class.

> We have our group work together and I often, what I do is I put my Reading Recovery children in different groups with all my other children who need help.

Writing skills

The children's skills in expressing themselves in writing have developed alongside progress in reading. Teachers indicated that the children are now 'willing to have a go', some with the confidence of Matthew to 'write what's in his head' and use new words. Others are 'still not risk takers' preferring to use words that are familiar.

Stories, like those written by Colin, may 'not be very complex, two sentences at the most, but you can really tell he's trying and that he's attempted all the words and you can really read it'. Other children are like Margaret whose writing had been 'almost non legible . . . . . . all over the page and she would attempt some words but was more happy to leave it a blank' and who is now able to write full stories with a beginning, a middle and an end.

> When we're doing story writing and she comes to conference she's very particular. It's amazing the change because her work doesn't look like it did at the beginning of the year . . . . it's so neat and she's writing full stories with a beginning, middle and an ending and usually only needs to get one or two words corrected which are usually sounded out, she's had a very good attempt at it. She's very proud of that. She says - oh, I only needed two words fixed up. Isn't that good? She's taking a lot of pride in her work now and I think her confidence is built up and she's a lot happier with the work.

Teachers still concerned about some children

Several children who had been discontinued were seen to still be of concern to their teachers.

In the classroom, Tom has not yet become independent in his use of the skills that he displayed during his Recovery sessions. His teacher says he 'is definitely a reader and writer' and that he performs 'above the middle of the class' but that 'he is not participating (in shared reading) at all' and that when he comes to a part he can't read he

> Often shrugs his shoulders and also looks at the pictures. Tries, tries to have a go at the word. Re-reads. He does those things but it's an effort.

However, his level of success when he uses those strategies is 'very good'. His teacher recognises the need for herself and for his parents to maintain their ongoing support. She says she spoke with his parents and said that even though Tom was now off the program

> he still needed that support from myself and them. Just because he had twenty intensive weeks didn't mean that he was going to be a reader and writer instantly, that we still needed to have support for him to help him through Year One and for his next year. And they were very good about it and they also asked what their role was with the reader at home so I went over that.

Richard was discontinued after two terms even though his class teacher indicated that 'he hadn't reached a level that was probably appropriate for Reading Recovery'. It was a school decision to place a time limit because

> . . . . . we felt there were other children on the program who would benefit from it and, in a way, Richard was blocking up the program. He'd been on the program for two terms and he was making a very, very slow recovery. He can now cope, he can now do some reading and writing. He has made some progress but he has not made the sort of progress, say for instance, Peter or the other children who are on the program have made. He's probably below average for the rest of the class. But we are giving him all the attention that we possibly can within the classroom. It was a very difficult decision to make because we still had other children in the class that needed attention and we just felt that we had to give those other children a chance after having Richard in there for so long. So, we made that decision.

His other teacher who is also the Reading Recovery teacher indicated that Richard, like Tom has to be encouraged to use the strategies he has learnt. She said that Richard is

> much more confident to try things, but still in the classroom, he sort of forgets that he has abilities that he now has. If I say to him come on and re-read it he can do it if he just has that little bit of encouragement. In the class situation he still needs to be reminded that he can do it, so his confidence hasn't improved as much as the other children seem to have. He has lots of strategies and skills now but he's not really confident in using them.

Both teachers alluded to the impact of home support in these two children's situations. Whereas Tom's teacher was able to respond to his parents' concerns and map out a joint support plan, Richard's teacher indicated her belief that his lack of confidence was in some degree also a product of 'a very confused home life and all those sorts of things that, I think, lessen his self esteem and his confidence'.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have focussed on the first cohort of children to go through the Reading Recovery program and on what their class teachers told us about their skills and behaviour prior to and following their discontinuation from the program. Children who, at the beginning of the year, had been withdrawn, non-participative, often appearing unhappy were now confident, participating members of their class, keen to share their skills and able to enjoy the class activities. They had progressed from having little or no strategies for reading and writing to the stage where most were independent readers, performing at or above average for their class.

The clearest message was the teachers' delight about the increased confidence that the children exhibited, not only in their reading and writing activities but generally in their whole experience at school. The teachers ascribed this increased confidence and higher self esteem to the children's experience in Reading Recovery. Having the skills to read and write, being more in control of what they were being asked to do and actually being able to participate resulted in a confidence that permeated all their activities.

But, as with any program, there were a few children for whom the experience was not sufficient for their needs. These children were helped but did not demonstrate the progress of the others.

A sample teaching load

In the Appendix, class teachers portray four of the children in the pilot program; Damien, Barry, Michelle and Ken. They describe the children before they went onto the program and then after they had been discontinued.

Each trainee Reading Recovery teacher worked with four children every day and these portrayals are presented as a sample of four children who could make up their teaching load.

Chapter 6

Being a Reading Recovery School

The twelve schools in the pilot were asked to reflect upon their Reading Recovery experience after the first year of implementation. In Chapter 3, expectations held at the beginning of the year were stated by the schools. Now, in this chapter, they are speaking from experience. Many of the benefits were now being realised, some of the concerns they had voiced earlier were also still being experienced.

Overwhelmingly, they identified the benefits to the children who had been on the program. They also recognised that there were spin offs already being seen as other staff members became more aware of and skilled in using some of the strategies in their own classroom situations. There was a benefit to the whole school in the way the school community felt about being part of a successful initiative that was clearly addressing a widespread need.

But all this came a quite a cost to many of the schools and their existing programs. Concern about funding remained in the forefront. Juggling to support the program had often meant that other programs had had to be put on hold and that staff relinquished release time and accepted added burdens in duties. Where the funding had be transferred from programs assisting older children there remained a sense that these children were casualties of the initiative.

Benefits

To the children on the program

The benefits to the children who progressed through Reading Recovery has been documented throughout this report. Each school has its own stories to recount about the pleasure derived from seeing children who once had no idea about reading and writing now functioning as confident, independent readers and writers, and active members of their class.

> I had two children on the program that couldn't tell whether the picture was upside down or the text was upside down and I thought

> - my God, how am I ever going to teach them how to read? And (now) they can. And one of those children is now the best reader in that class. It has just been incredible to be able to see these children progress. Little ones that you thought would have no chance of being readers. Especially one child. His father came and he said - look, I've always had children that can't read and he said Martin can now read. He said - it's a dream come true for me. He was just so thankful and I said - look, it's not me. It's Reading Recovery. And he would now be the greatest advocate. He's rung the radio. He's spoken on the radio about it. He is just so pleased and I take heart in knowing that we've changed their lives.

To the children outside the program

The schools recognised that the benefits went much further than the children on the program. There was a new level of skill and understanding about literacy attainment spreading through the staff in many of the schools and the strategies were being picked up and used to enhance classroom learning. This flow-on effect was seen as being very important in the long term with some expectation that it could change the way of teaching children to read and it 'should allow a teacher a lot more freedom to explore different areas of reading and writing and to have a lot more reading rather than spending a lot of time on remedial type things as well.' As an Assistant Principal indicated

> It's (Reading Recovery) had a lot of very subtle affects in that it's forced all of us to read, I mean we've all had to pick up Marie Clay to know what's going on. The Reading Recovery teacher has talked to the staff about running records, for example, and even for the people who've done ELIC, it's a long time since we've done ELIC so there's been lots of flow ons from that point of view. I've found it very interesting because talking to her and watching her work, reinforces your own ideas on the philosophy of how children learn to read. Little things, like I've always loved magnetic letters and, lo and behold, there's (the Reading Recovery teacher) using magnetic letters. That sort of thing is very reassuring. We've always tried to give Kindy at the end of the year some words out of shared book, beginning with a little bit of sight vocabulary. It's very old fashioned here with most of the teachers feeling that they need some sight words to be able to go into Year One, and just naturally re-inforced with words that are used in context in running records. So there's a tie-in coming into other classrooms and it's just up to other teachers as to whether they use our Reading Recovery teacher and the skills that she's got.

To the school as a whole

There was already evidence that if the school was seen to be addressing a need and doing it successfully then its image in the community would be strengthened.

> I think (Reading Recovery's) become a selling point for the school. The Reading Recovery teacher talked about it yesterday at Kindy orientation and it's a real bonus to be able to say that your school's got it.
>
> In fact their (parents') comments would be so positive about the school that I think it will generate out as a ripple, really to say - 'Hey, this school does something for reading. This school does something for my child because the effects are more than reading.' The effects are confidence, maths, language....all these learning areas the children are performing well. And confidence too. So it's got a reaching effect.
>
> I think there is a flow on with the staff feeling good about a successful initiative and we're moving on this and it helps to add to our esteem as a school to say - you know, we're getting feedback which is good and we're succeeding at it and I think that's got a nice flow on too. I see that very much happening, the staff would say, - yes, we're doing Reading Recovery. It's one of our pluses. In other words, we've got this and we're running with it and it's working for us and I think that's a very good thing to happen for the staff.
>
> Good new travels fast. If a kiddie's done well on it and has really made improvements, they (the child's parents) tell the other parents.

The community may even quickly come to expect it.

> I think if our school wasn't on the Reading Recovery program and the school up the road was, I think they'd sort of feel neglected and then we'd probably be in strife because we hadn't done anything about it.

To Reading Recovery Teachers

In terms of professional development, the benefit to Reading Recovery teachers was seen as far reaching and often they were already being perceived as a valuable asset to their school. The experiences of Reading Recovery teachers are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 7.

Resourcing the program

All the schools managed to complete the year with their program intact, but for some schools particularly, it had been a source of continual worry.

> All the way through (the year) we were scrounging for time and still we're now at the end and only have about two weeks to go but we're still scrounging days from here and there.

Principals were very concerned at 'costs' in terms of the effects on the other programs in the school, and the burden taken up by other staff.

> I still think in the negative area that the extra stresses that it does create in that we are under resourced in classrooms....it's a big one. We've lost families. That's one of the sacrifices we've made because out there is the perception that we have large classes.

> I don't believe it should be entirely up to the resources of the school and I don't believe that I should be asking teachers to be foregoing their release time and other things like that which is the only way that it could survive.. . .

Other schools, sometimes because of their size or particular circumstances were less affected by the juggling necessary to fund the program.

> We had that gift of .4 which meant that we could still continue with our language research, which had to be done with our own time and our own energy and not only that but we did heaps and heaps of evaluations. I think that schools that didn't have that found that they couldn't function effectively to give a .5 commitment. We had no difficulty in giving that. In fact when we took teachers away, up to the Reading Recovery Centre to observe and things like that, it was easy for us to withdraw people because we still had that little bit of flexibility whereas schools who had the whole commitment and every ounce of energy could not do that. In other words, they couldn't deliver the whole package the way that we delivered the whole package.

Flexible staffing was another school's answer

> (A teacher) was transferred who was an executive teacher and the staff kindly followed the suggestion to not employ an executive teacher but to employ a three year trained teacher, not in the promotions position, in that place. The salary difference then is about $5,200. We then convert that to vouchers, casual or one day vouchers and that's the way that we did fund it, so there was a

> reduced promotional position in the school. The funds that we saved were then put into Reading Recovery.

There was considerable concern about the lack of funding support from the various educational systems.

> I'm very negative about the Education System wanting us to take something on board on the cheap and not supplying the teacher or the financial resources to back it up and I think it's pathetic. Let us select the person but give us a .5. I think it's criminal because of the direct hurt and the cost price to us.
>
> I think that there is a gross inadequacy of funding for support whether it's for Support Teacher Learning Difficulties or for this program. The minister has said that she strongly supports the program, - well, where's the support? There's no support.

At the end of the year there still remained the question. Is it value for money?

> Well, I think we can get euphoric about the fact that six children have made remarkable progress. That's great. But if there are thirty children who need the assistance - if this is a public institution well then we are not doing the right thing by all the taxpaying people that pay the tax money to run the school. We're very thrilled that it's happening and it may be that because of that example, in five years time, we'll have more teachers teaching or assessing the way they should approach reading rather than teaching reading, in fact that's probably...they probably won't teach reading they'll be assessing how children are learning to read and that might be a......so, in the long term it may be alright but in the short term I still think it's too resource intensive for the benefits that you get.

Problems

For other members of the school staff

Not having had the whole staff sufficiently involved in the decision to take on Reading Recovery and select the teacher created problems in some schools.

> Selection of the Reading Recovery Teacher was one area that I think caused a few problems and you learn from experience. Not that I didn't choose the right person but it really boiled down to the fact that the executive with myself made that choice and that was the mistake. Because there wasn't time to open it up to full staff. It was all done in quite a hurry so that we wouldn't miss out in getting into Reading Recovery this year. We examined the staff from our angle and we chose the person we felt fitted the job and we are delighted

> with the choice that we made. The upset came because the staff retaliated at the way that that was done. That they were not given equal opportunity to apply for the position.

Communicating about Reading Recovery was an important part of the Reading Recovery teacher's role but it was impeded where staff could not get to see the process in action or find time to talk with the Reading Recovery teacher.

As one Reading Recovery teacher said

> None (infants staff saw a lesson). There is no provision here for relief. No teacher in the school can get out of their classroom, I've made the invitation but it's just impossible to get relief.

and a Year One class teacher also expressed frustration that

> Sometimes it is difficult to know just exactly where the kids are going and what I can do in the classroom, and that's a time thing. It would just take me to go down and ask the Reading Recovery teacher about it but when I find the time she may not be there. It's just one of those things so I guess communication is a big thing.

In most schools there was an added burden placed on the rest of the staff. For some it meant loss of face to face release time, running with a larger class, extra lunchtime duties, less support for special learning needs in their classes.

> Hopefully the staff is not going to see that an hour or two off face to face is any better than having a Reading Recovery teacher in the school.
>
> I mean teachers are very reluctant to give up part of the release from face to face and that's a right they've got and I can respect that right if they want it in one form or another somewhere.
>
> That other half hour (of lunchtime) will be spent on one child so the Reading Recovery Teacher will be released from (lunchtime duties) which throws the onus back on other teachers to do more work. They are the sorts of things that cause hassles in a school.

Problems for other children with literacy learning needs

Most schools who had utilised their Support Teacher Learning Difficulties time for Reading Recovery went to great lengths to maintain their support of the other children with learning needs who otherwise would be disadvantaged.

Parents were enlisted as special reading tutors, Principals took on special needs groups, class teachers worked with individual children before and after school.

> The Principal invited parents, grandparents and interested community people who thought they could give the time to come in and be 'trained', and then take up a reading tutor role with various grades across the school and groups of children and that's worked very well. So that's one way I suppose that we've attempted to overcome that problem.

> Two teachers have been working independently with those reading deficient kids in their own classrooms before school and after school.

Children in the other grades who were missing out were a widespread concern

> Some members of staff feel that it has taken valuable time away from the Support Teacher Learning Difficulties' other duties and therefore if we could analyse that and relate it to the six or nine students that have gained tremendous support it may be to the detriment of twenty or thirty other children who have missed out.

But, as one teacher expressed it

> I just found that when I was Learning Difficulties and was spread through the school I was just a band aid. There was no satisfaction for me for a start and the same kids you saw year after year. So I think I was a good choice (to focus on Reading Recovery).

Two other categories of children would continue to 'miss out' if all the resources were targetted on Year One and if the program selection criteria was followed: those who came to the school beyond Year One level with reading difficulties; and, those who were in Year One but did not meet the age or length of time at school criteria. This second group was of particular concern for several schools. According to the criteria for selection children needed to have been at school for one year and to be six years old. This does not match with the situation of some children in the schools.

> We have a program that has been lifted from one education system into a different education system, we have rules that we have been supposed to go along with, like the one year in the school rule and as far as I can work out it is different here in our system because our children come to school at four and a half years of age, so that at the end of one year they might be five and a half years old which is significantly younger than they might have been in New Zealand. I think that an arbitrary rule like that has to be bent in terms of what

> does make sense in our system, and in fact we will review that next year. If we see a child that has been 18 months in the school and we feel that it's on to be involved in Reading Recovery then we'll do that.
>
> I know it's the oldest youngest business but it introduces another sort of variable that they don't appear to have in Victoria because Debra said they are all five (years old) when they start and six months is incredibly significant at this age. It really makes an enormous affect on how they perform in class.

According to one Assistant Principal, a way around the problem would be to test in June of each year.

Problems for the Reading Recovery teacher's own class

Of major concern to those Reading Recovery teachers who were also classroom teachers was the disruption to their own class and the detrimental effect this could have on the children. Teachers were out of their class for at least two hours each day, and longer on training session days.

In some situations schools organised for a single replacement teacher for the whole year

> We gave one whole area of the day over to a casual teacher who is very highly respected and five days a week (for the year) Gina came in so the parents were told early in the year that they would be sharing Carol and Gina and because they have great respect for both teachers we haven't had one complaint. What you do is you make sure that one person takes maths right the way through and the other person takes language right through. You can share a few things like PE. One can take PE and the other one can a day later or something but for your main core subjects the one person has to run through the week. If you do it that way then you don't have any problems.

In others this did not happen

> In our case it meant bringing in other teachers and so that class ended up with four or five different teachers and it's not something you would plan to do with a Kindergarten class.

In order to make sharing of the class effective it was seen as crucial that the Reading Recovery teacher have full confidence in the person who was to become their part replacement.

> If we are going to have a teacher go off and do specialised withdrawal work and still retain ownership of the class she must have a high level of confidence in the person who is replacing her.

Even when teachers had not seen any 'ill effects as far as (the children's) achievements' went there was still concern that it hadn't been ' an exciting year' for their class.

> We fit quite a bit of (art and craft) in by integrating it but there's not the follow up time that you have in a normal classroom. Where I used to love getting into themes and developing things with the children we haven't been able to do that, so in that respect I think it has been a duller time for the children. We've been on less excursions because my obligations have been here with Reading Recovery.

The tight scheduling developed to co-ordinate the coverage of curriculum areas was seen to have disadvantages.

> I did language with my class and then I went straight into Reading Recovery. I should have had half an hour where I did something else in the class. I just needed that time to get to know the class. I've lost a certain rapport with the kids in my class because I just haven't been able to do the art and craft and those social things that you can do with little kids.

The issues concerning the Reading Recovery teachers are focussed on in the following chapter, Being a Reading Recovery Teacher.

Conclusion

In their initial year of Being a Reading Recovery School, schools had been able to see many benefits already unfolding. The children who had been on the program had, in most cases, 'more than caught up' with their classmates in reading and writing, while, just as importantly, they had gained in self esteem and general enjoyment of the learning process. Reading Recovery strategies were being picked up by other staff and being incorporated into infants classrooms. There was a sense of optimism being felt by the schools because they were successfully addressing a longstanding problem. Their communities were aware of this and were showing an appreciation of their efforts.

The way in which Reading Recovery is implemented is important to its subsequent success. Finding the funds to resource the program remains a major stumbling block for Principals, particularly in terms of the 'cost' to other programs running in the school and, in some cases, to the workloads of other teachers. A good communication and support network needs to be in place, to support the Reading Recovery teacher and facilitate the influence that the program can have in the Infants classrooms.

Chapter 7

Being a Reading Recovery Teacher

Introduction

1991 was a memorable year for the twelve teachers who became the North Coast's first graduates of the Reading Recovery teacher training program. The teachers described the year as a period of 'ups and downs'. Many commented that the training year was 'the most challenging', 'the most exhausting' and 'the most rewarding' of their teaching careers. All agreed that being a Reading Recovery teacher was an extremely demanding role. The expectations of their schools, the Tutor and the region were measured constantly against their performance. This chapter describes the pressures, rewards, challenges and disappointments the teachers experienced and their future commitments to the Reading Recovery program. It largely draws upon the interviews conducted in November with the Reading Recovery teachers. In addition, initial and final journal entries from each of the twelve teachers have been inserted. These journal entries provide snapshots of the teachers' experiences during their challenging training year.

Overall outcomes

The teachers expressed their overall satisfaction with Reading Recovery by referring to the numbers of children they had discontinued. These 'discontinued' children are those returned to their Year One classrooms able to function as an independent readers at the average class level. The goal of a Reading Recovery teacher is to successfully discontinue as many children as possible throughout the year. In schools where eight or more children had completed the program or were likely to be discontinued in early 1992, the teachers considered the program to have been successful.

> Well, I think that success is the word that springs to mind first. I've had five children discontinue (and three almost there) and I feel so much more confident. I've always been optimistic about it but the proof's in the pudding. We've got the numbers on the board so to speak. I've had nothing but absolutely superb support from my Principal.

Extracts from Sally's Journal

First Entry (February)
I am excited to be actually training in this program after wanting to see it's implementation so badly. At the same time I feel it is a big responsibility as everyone expects miracles from the program- and I'm the one at the school level responsible for producing these miracles.

I find it hard to concentrate after the trip this morning- it's very tiring to walk in late after concentrating on traffic for almost two hours and go straight into this.

Probably the thing that excites me the most about the program is the acceleration of learning. Seeing the child progress at a rapid rate and seeing the changes within the child.

The school has been and is very supportive. All the staff are enthusiastic about the program following Joan Smith's visit.

While the staff are very supportive I don't think any of them really believe it to be as hard mentally and emotionally as it is and will be.

I'm enjoying the group. We are all different and it's interesting to hear the problems that others have. At the same time it makes me content to be at my school where the problems don't seem to be as evident.

The only negative thought I have is that it is a long way to travel for in-service. But then I wanted to do the course and am quite happy to travel if that's the only way I can train.

Last Entry (December)
Here it is the last in-service session, hard to believe. I can honestly say that I have never found anything as beneficial as Reading Recovery has been. I know I am a better teacher than I was twelve months ago and have a much finer knowledge as to how children read and how to teach children to read.

I know that the eleven children who twelve months ago were struggling along at the bottom of Year One are also very grateful that I did Reading Recovery this year. I know I have changed their lives and not just for now , but because they know "HOW TO", forever.

It has been an extremely stressful but rewarding year. I think the stress is something that should be discussed as I know many of us have felt the effects health wise.

A bonus from Reading Recovery has been the group. We have become so supportive and close it has been wonderful and I will certainly miss seeing everyone and look forward to the six in-services next year.

Staff interest and enthusiasm for the program was also considered by the Reading Recovery teachers to be a contributing sign indicating the success of the intervention. At least half of the Reading Recovery teachers reported increased interest in the program by staff as they witnessed the children's accelerated reading improvement. In schools where a considerable number of children were discontinued throughout the year the teachers were approached by staff eager to discuss the possibility of training as Reading Recovery teachers.

> Reading Recovery? I love it! We've had eleven children go through on the program. The staff have been very supportive. It was interesting when we filled out that form as to who was prepared to train - most people were prepared to train and I was really surprised . . . . There was one teacher at the beginning of the year, who was really anti Reading Recovery, who said now he would train. I couldn't believe it. I thought - after all this crap I got off him at the beginning of the year

The teachers perceived the program to have been highly successful in schools where all the children eligible for entry to the program had been discontinued. These schools were fully 'recovered' and left without a literacy problem in the Year One classes. Only two schools considered they had achieved this goal. These were smaller schools with student numbers below three hundred. In these schools the lowest achieving children were discontinued. Several children identified at the beginning of the year as possible candidates for later entry to the program were found to have made progress with in their classrooms, so the need for Reading Recovery in these schools had been satisfied.

> I suppose being only a small school there's only about forty children in Year 1 (has helped). When we tested the children at the beginning of the year there were about ten or twelve on the list. So we were able to get to the oldest children first quite readily and a couple of children who were on the original list blossomed anyway so they were taken off (the list).

In the larger schools several teachers were pleased with the results they had achieved and with the accelerated progress the children had made. However, in these schools the teachers qualified their glowing evaluations of the program because there were still a considerable number of children requiring Reading Recovery assistance. The teachers in these schools considered the staffing resources inadequate in comparison to the numerous children in need of literacy support.

Extracts from Annabelle's Journal

First Entry (February)
After attending the in-service/information day at South Grafton given by Joan Smith I felt enthused , interested and keen to know more. My Principal has had previous experience with Reading Recovery.

I attended the talk given by Barbara Watson, enthusiasm is mounting- this is a possible new career path for me. Statistics on the Recovery rate and continued acceleration rate are very impressive and encouraging. Wouldn't it be marvellous if this program really does solve the problem of kids being in some form of remediation program for their entire schooling.

The first meeting in February - I can see the absolute necessity for both Principal and Reading Recovery teacher to be present at this first meeting. It is vital that the whole school understands and supports the Reading Recovery program and teacher. I am extremely pleased that my Principal understands and supports the program firstly to keep the Staff informed (I'm not at school every day) and secondly to be amenable to and understanding of any pressures, problems I may encounter or resources I may need.

After the first Systematic Observation day I felt a little in awe of how highly structured the lessons will be. Will I be able to memorise every step, procedure and response? Have I sufficient resources, so many things are critical - choice of book, running records, lesson procedure, there is little margin for "omission/error."

For the kids, I sincerely hope I can "produce the goods" and help the children get off the treadmill of long term remediation which in many cases is a placebo, not a cure. I enjoy the group - pity it wasn't mixed, but there aren't many male experienced infants teachers. Everyone seems to mix well and appears to be very experienced, dedicated teachers.

Last Entry (December)
Doing the end of year testing evaluation was extremely time consuming, anxiety producing and in my case difficult. The teacher trained to do the testing at my school is on long service leave. I was a bit nervous before re-testing the first boy to leave the program. I was thrilled that he had not only maintained but had increased his instructional level.

Nearing the end of the year thoughts turn to 1992. The Kinder teacher has already been approached by some parents who want their child to be on the program next year.

I am pushing really hard to discontinue one child before the end of the year and, boy, is he responding. In six weeks he has gone from level three to level sixteen. I'll definitely be starting the year with only two carrying on. Boy, how I've grown professionally during this in-service year. I won't list how, but I know. I am more insightful, searching and inquiring. I now reflect on my teaching more than previously. The times of frustration still come, but now I have strategies to overcome the particular problem facing me.

It is just wonderful to see and hear kids who were absolutely floundering at the beginning of the year, now reading and enthusiastic about it. I was dead scared of doing my final year testing - I thought that my teaching may not have been good enough to "produce the goods". What a high! What a confidence booster when the kids had maintained and improved their position at discontinuing.

Lastly - words cannot express the good feelings I have about coming to the in-services, the support, the friendship, camaraderie and good feelings of this wonderful group of professional, talented, committee teachers and Tutor.

> Well, Reading Recovery has been excellent. The children who have been lucky enough to be on the program have done really well and are now really competent, independent readers in the classroom. Our problem is that we have too many children for just one teacher so that has been a problem because this year there are children who really are at risk and who aren't on the program. Perhaps not at risk. I think we've probably got the worst problems but there are others who could have gained a lot from being on the program

Several teachers considered the huge demand for Reading Recovery left unquenched in their schools as a personal reflection on their ability as a Reading Recovery teacher. They identified personal disappointment that they had been unable to 'dissolve' all the literacy problems as had been expected by the school.

> But I'm not getting enough children through. You see we had about thirty children who needed (Reading Recovery). No I'm not meeting all the needs and I think that's hard to justify to the staff in a big school like this. If I'd got up and said you know - I've helped six children. I think they'd probably think - that's alright but what about the rest of them..

Changing lives

Ninety one children were assisted through Reading Recovery during the first year of the program on the North Coast (Vains, 1991, p.5). The achievements of these children compensated the Reading Recovery teachers for the 'low' periods they experienced during the year. The teachers spoke with joy and incredulity of their 'success stories'. Children who had been labelled as 'unteachable', 'who couldn't tell whether the picture was upside down or the text was upside down' became children who 'just loved reading'. Not only did they love to read during their Reading Recovery lessons but, as the teachers discovered towards the end of 1991, most of the children had continued to read, improving or maintaining their reading levels, while back in their classrooms.

> We had a little girl that we thought was unteachable and I believed in her and finally we got her to level 16 and her teacher said it was an impossibility. Terrey has worked extremely well and not only worked extremely well back in July, but she's held her position right through . In the beginning I thought that this would only work while I had her but I can see that she learnt all her strategies and kept them there. She had no memory for things when she started.....she

Extracts from Carol's Journal

First Entry (February)
I heard about Reading Recovery some years ago. More recently my nephew went into Reading Recovery at his school. I guess I was sold on Reading Recovery when my nephew arrived at our house with heaps of books and asking if he could read to me. What a transformation! From a kid who was anti school, reading or anything he had become keen to read to me.

Now, on to me - Since arriving on the North Coast - beautiful climate, great people but work wise has not been the most stimulating for me. I'm often in trouble for hair brain ideas but in the region I came from we had so much going and new ideas were accepted or at least given a go. The staff I work with are fantastic people but very negative and hesitant about anything new or changes. Okay as long as it doesn't mean extra time or documentation to them.

Now this opportunity has come up and I hope I can fulfil the expectations the staff and parents have of the program.

I have a few hurdles to cover. Parents approaching me and asking if their child can be in the program. Teachers thinking this will "fix" the children having reading problems from Kinder to Year 2. I've done a lot of talking and sharing with others and I have the support of the Year 1 teachers and this is a plus.

I find the group interesting and feel very much for those having hassles getting established.

In the long term I hope I am able to be successful in this work and help the children involved. At present in the system children are the bottom of the priorities and my love of young children and the concern I have for education concerns me in the present climate. A challenging year ahead, but I am positive and above all enthusiastic.

Last Entry (December)
At the beginning of the year this last in-service seemed so far away, but now that it is here I'm amazed that it has gone so quickly. To think we have done so much in that time overwhelms me. I think the big plus about Reading Recovery has been the camaraderie amongst the group and the support we gave to each other. At times I've felt like giving up - even retiring from teaching at the end of last term. In all my teaching career I've never suffered stress and even to come out in a "nerve rash" which it took days to convince me I had. Many tears have been shed and at home the strain on my husband, living with a strung up, nervous, moody wreck has been hard for him and me. It has been the most challenging year I've ever had - but I feel better for it professionally. I'll feel better physically in a couple of weeks.

The times I've wanted answers were frustrating. I felt at times that I'm better being told what to do and how to do it, but I realise finding it out the hard way was the way to learn. I'm looking forward to next year and to having a bit more time to do some reading of the texts to clarify some confusions I have. I'm especially looking forward to the group still keeping in contact and the great friendships we've made.

> knew one word.......just one word and the word was -'I'. It was the only word that she could recognise when she started (Reading Recovery)...

The teachers were delighted to observe that the benefits of Reading Recovery reached further than the children's improved levels of reading and writing. 'The biggest benefit is the self esteem of the children'. As the children gained confidence in their own literacy abilities they became 'achievers' across all curriculum areas and became more assured socially when interacting with their peers.

> We have given them a chance that they wouldn't have had before and even in the playground I've noticed that previously they would be little ones that would sit by themselves and have their morning tea and they didn't mix with anyone. Two of them didn't speak to anyone all through Kindergarten. Didn't speak to anyone in Year One and now they get up and read at Mass. It's just changed their life. In the playground now they mix with the others, they play with the others and they're the leaders in some cases because they've got that confidence that they didn't have and that has been the greatest benefit for me to see those changes.

Being able to closely observe the growth in literacy learning and self esteem of children from the lowest achieving band of Year One students left a profound effect on several Reading Recovery teachers. They discarded their previously blinkered views of children's learning potential. In the long term it would appear that these altered beliefs may result in the most significant and lasting impact of 'being a Reading Recovery teacher'.

> I believe that every child has a right to learn to read. To what degree......I've got reservations but I think that those other children in years gone by, that you just think are going to be a non reader, I think that they've just gone through the system and worked out other methods that you never hear about, but they go through without anybody knowing that they can't read.......I don't believe that any more.......Everyone does have a right to learn to read and that was a change for me to have to think that. Hard as it may be, you've got to work at it.

Professional development of the Reading Recovery teachers

The Reading Recovery teachers acknowledged the enormous benefits they had gained from their involvement in the Reading Recovery training program. Not only did they feel 'more confident' as teachers, more knowledgeable about the

Extracts from Rita's Journal

First entry (February)

Expectations: I hope to finally use a method that will provide the child with an opportunity to succeed in reading and to keep succeeding as he goes into primary etc. It is very disheartening to see the same children year after year requiring help and continually face the door of failure. I hope it will also provide me with some satisfaction to keep trying and to continue the program. You need this if you face obstacles and sarcastic comments along the way.

The infants staff are behind it, although one does question the cost $$$. Primary staff (or some) have been there, done that, another scheme to learn and throw away in a few years. What a lurk!! The one member of staff who has the biggest doubts about the scheme is the Learning Difficulties Support Teacher. He cannot justify one-to-one for half an hour. I am to be using the 'Clinic' which he used last year and he 's not happy!

Thoughts: The program is in very early stages but I feel quite enthused about it. I have some doubts about my own ability but that's me. The thought of the one way glass makes my mouth dry.
Difficulty No 1.- finding books.
Difficulty No 2.-being a supply casual you're in demand. For instance, I had the morning to find books, etc. Half an hour later I had to mind a class (the teacher was sick, so I won't complain); next I had to mind another class; next a teacher wanting to know how little Johnny is ...No work done for me.
Interaction: Enjoy the girls company - hopefully we'll be good friends by the end of the course. So glad a friend is doing the course too, as I have someone to whinge to or share results, progress.
Preservation: - with the demands of a husband, two children, and a school who think I'm at the beck-n-call I wonder what I'll be like in three months time - or three weeks time for that matter.

Last entry (December)

In-services:
Reading Recovery: This year has been incredible. At the beginning of the year I realised I was not a reading teacher at all, and that was only after the first couple of in-services. There was so much information to think about, to explore and to carry out. I have never felt so distraught, so useless and so confused in all my life.
This feeling has continued for most of the year, as I feel now we constantly question to improve - just the same as the child learning to read. Teaching behind the screen gave me my grey hairs, ulcers, etc. But it is the most powerful tool for learning. I'm getting used to it.
The in-services are very intensive and I'm sure I didn't even know my name when I'd leave of an afternoon. So much to digest and try to remember.

PROGRAM:-
Advantages:
a) a program that works!
b) I know it has worked so far as the children who were discontinued at the beginning of the year have kept going - talking with their parents confirms this too.
c) learned so much more about reading - I thought I knew a lot before but now I know I knew very little.
d) children are always succeeding as they self improve.

Disadvantages:
a) poor facilities as to my room - it is not a room conducive to learning - however, I'm working on this.
b) stress - physical and mental - that has occurred during the year - sleepless nights, grey hairs, more weight.
c) pressure - from in-services, staff, executive, etc. need to gain results.
The Tutor has been a hard taskmaster, but we now know that she had to do that to make us Reading Recovery Teachers who are great.

literacy learning process and generally 'far better teachers' than before they had embarked on their Reading Recovery journey, but they also recognised that they had become more thoughtful teachers. As they reflected upon past teaching philosophies they became convinced that literacy was best taught through a combination of methods rather than the sole adherence to one technique. Their literacy teaching philosophies became more 'holistic' as the teachers 'tuned in to the way that children read'.

> I've become a far better teacher. We've had to, like the child, throw out all our previous philosophies and ideas, still keep them on the shelf but be open to this. I feel I now know more about reading than I've known over 19 years. I know what the child is doing...
>
> Oh.....one good thing, I've learnt that phonics and sounding out aren't the be all and end all of a good reader. All my life I've done phonics and sounding out....they are part of it..........I won't throw them out, but they're not the be all and end all.
>
> I know a lot more about teaching reading. A lot more, and I think it's probably taken this long to convince me that this method is right. I was, when I first came out teaching, I was under a lady that I just loved but she was exceptionally formal and that has tended to haunt me. Very formal, very sight word orientated, that sort of thing and I think I've learnt that that's not the way to go.

The camaraderie and friendship which developed amongst the Reading Recovery Trainees was an unexpected bonus of their training. The teachers met each fortnight during the in-service sessions and kept in regular contact through the telephone and 'colleague visits' to each others schools. This network of peer support was drawn upon by the teachers when they needed reassurance but felt the problem too trivial to warrant contacting the Tutor.

> Everyone is....there's a real feeling of camaraderie and mutual support and respect there which I really look forward to. I'm going to miss that next year.....
>
> And in the group if anyone had a problem you knew that you could ring up. Once I thought I would be so humiliated to ask anyone but Annabelle would understand how I feel.... So I rang Annabelle and I said - 'Look, I don't know whether I'm on the right track or not but do you think this?' . . . . And she said - 'Oh yes, that's all, that's fine, that's all you've got to do.' So it was good to have them. You knew that you had them there if you needed them and we had the phone and I wouldn't have hesitated to ring any one of them, you know, if I needed any help because you sort of found that everybody had something different that they could offer.

Extracts from Heather's Journal

First Entry (February)
Expectations: A new lease of life. To learn how to teach children more efficiently. I feel that I have taught reading in many ways and over my years of teaching there have been drastic changes in my style. I'd like to settle on one and say this is it.

School: To overcome as many reading deficiencies as possible before they become real problems in the primary school.

Concerns:
My class, my workload as Executive teacher, class teacher and Reading Recovery teacher. As Reading Recovery teacher I now lose my release time therefore I'll have less time and more work.

I am however, committed to the program, I just feel I would like to have less other responsibilities and I feel envious, jealous, hatred of those people who can claim this is what they do, eg. Resource Teacher and Supply Casuals.

I feel I have a great deal of pressure on me as a Reading Recovery teacher. We have a large number of 'slow' children in our school. Can children who are potentially IM/OA really achieve grade level? As an ex IM teacher I am personally not convinced that they will improve to the desired levels and I am concerned that the class teachers will think I am not performing if they don't.

There is such a thing as intellectually mildly handicapped isn't there?

Last Entry (August)
I have had three children on the program all year. They are sick of me and sick of reading I am sure!

Such little progression has been made by two boys particularly. Some thing must be done. It's not working. I am sick of it!

For three teachers this group support was recognised as the key factor encouraging them to continue with their training. Without the support of their peers these teachers doubted whether they would have had the 'strength to finish' the Reading Recovery in-service course.

> I'm pleased that I've finally got to the end and I didn't pull out which I was going to do, except for Sally I would have pulled out. Oh, I thought. I'm getting too old for this. I'm getting too old to learn and go through all this pressure and lose all this sleep and churn things over. But I thought - I'm not a quitter and Sally was there and she said - 'You've got to keep coming.' So I kept at it and I'm pleased that I did in the end because I know that I've benefitted professionally.

The pressure of children who were 'difficult to recover'

Although all the teachers recognised that they had benefitted professionally by becoming Reading Recovery teachers, they also unanimously noted that this professional growth was acquired only with the considerable expenditure of personal effort. Being a Reading Recovery teacher was found to be most rewarding but also 'challenging', 'difficult' and at times most 'stressful'. A common source of 'concern' or 'pressure' during the year was the 'difficult child'.

From the outset several teachers had held reservations regarding the suitability of all children as candidates for Reading Recovery. It was suggested by some of the Reading Recovery teachers and the executive staff within their schools that not all children would respond to the program. The concern was expressed that children who were slow to recover or who did not make accelerated progress would limit the number of children able to be tutored. These concerns eventuated in a number of schools. For the teachers, these 'difficult' children were a stress, causing fluctuations in the levels of satisfaction with their own teaching performance.

> Well (Reading Recovery) has had it's ups and downs. I've had four children on and I hope to discontinue four by the end of the year, but I've had one on since the beginning of the year and I've got three difficult children which I'm finding hard to move on. So its had its good and its bad. But they've all actually gone from where they were and they've all made progress. Generally more good than bad.

Extracts from Carmel's Journal

First Entry (March)
I hope from this course that I will become an observant and better informed teacher. I guess when I commenced this course I hoped that it would interweave with my Literacy Course from university. I have just started roaming the known and one of my concerns is that three of the children actually know more words than those showed up in the testing.

I have found today very interesting. Some of today's discussion I have not fully understood but I know I will catch up sometime.

Last Entry (December)
This past twelve months has been a time of learning for me. My attitudes to reading have changed and my methods have gradually changed on a classroom basis.

When I began I was a little bit worried about how I would cope with Reading Recovery but with the support of the Tutor and the ladies in the group I found I coped very well. I had my ups and downs through the year and have had my times of being close to tears, especially with Kirsty but the progress of the others I have taught has kept me going.

Kirsty brought me close to tears on many occasions. When I thought I was making progress she would do things to make me realise that she wasn't coping.

I was worried about Matthew falling back after he discontinued so it was with trepidation that I approached the final testing. After Matthew completed his testing I was very pleased as even though he had not made any great progress back in the class he had not fallen back and after hearing him read to me I was pleased with his attitude.

Kylie has been absolutely wonderful and is progressing in leaps and bounds.

The three new children on the program are progressing well and I expect to discontinue them early next year.

I am pleased that I have had the opportunity to do this Reading Recovery course and I am looking forward to next year.

Many of the teachers were confronted by at least one of these difficult children during the year.

> I feel stressed, well, I go up and down like this with Reading Recovery. . . . . It's like a roller coaster and it can happen with the same child. And then maybe the child will plateau out and I get very concerned, I wouldn't say stressed, but very concerned. As we've noticed in the in-services, the teacher's attitude to the child changes, so that's another factor that may inhibit the movement and then all of a sudden off they go again and it feels terrific. A bit of an emotional roller coaster.

During the training year the Reading Recovery teachers are required to keep all children on the program until they reach the average reading level of the Year One class. However, once the training year is completed children who are slow to recover are assessed at the end of twenty weeks and if their progress is deemed to be minimal then they are exited from the program and referred on for specialist support. This early exiting method was not available to teachers in the training year as the Reading Recovery Tutor explains.

> Well, if they're working with this one particular child and they're not seeming to get anywhere or it's very slow. Well, if I was to pull that child out and say. 'Okay you don't have to have that child' then I'm setting them up for a way out next year. If they get a child that's a bit tricky and they'll say, 'Oh well she took one out last year so I'll take one out this year.' So your selection criteria is off. They're also learning, so with the difficult children they are going to take longer and towards the end of the year when they've got a lot of knowledge and expertise those difficult children move quickly.

Three teachers in the group had children on the program for over three terms. These teachers also had more than one child who was 'difficult to recover'. The stress they felt was particularly severe.

> When my first four kids were brought into the scheme they weren't people that seemed to go along quickly and I seemed to be getting bogged down. And Heather and I used to sit there and think , 'Oh, everyone else's kids are sky rocketing through the scheme.' And Heather and I, our kids were just plodding. And we thought 'Oh, is it the kids or is it us? What are we doing wrong?' And it was a fair bit of pressure that I felt and Heather felt. Because the kids were slow. The others were pushing their kids through and we were plodding along and I don't know, there were just little things all the time that seemed to sort of worry and upset me. It was tough. I think it was tough.

Extracts from Elizabeth's Journal

First Entry (February)
Feeling rather daunted about the amount of work that may be required.
I expect to be a much improved Reading teacher rather than doing band-aid treatments. I'm looking forward to seeing the rapid improvement of the kids, thus showing some members of staff that it is working, despite the handful of kids involved.

Being a casual teacher I hope the course will show that I am too valuable not to be employed (a selfish reason- permanent part-time).At this stage I'm so tired at night to fully comprehend the "Clay" texts- when I start to read them I immediately begin to feel tired!!! (A defence mechanism.)

Group seems nice and I trust will always help and co-operate with each other. School as yet hasn't had a staff meeting so I don't know the extent of support or understanding of Reading Recovery. I've had to talk hard to one Year One teacher to try to get his support - he can't see that four Year One kids per sixteen weeks is helping enough kids. I feel sorry for the kids who need help and didn't get to see me as dozens want to come and have sessions with me and can't understand why they weren't selected. I was relieved that the Tutor wasn't so formidable last Tuesday as she appeared on the Friday before. The Boss and I were rather apprehensive that I'd be working like a slave with no breaks and no room for any sickness, etc!!!

Last Entry (December)
Boy what a year - ups and downs, ins and outs. I think this year has been the toughest - or most trying and tiring since my first year out in 1971.
Good Points:
I've developed professionally. I know heaps more about the teaching and ins and outs of reading than I thought was possible. (Actually I didn't realise that reading was so complex!!) Great group dynamics - a lovely group of women. Rewarding to see the kids blossom, learn to read and often change their behaviour from a constant pest, to a helpful, well disciplined, contributing member of the class. Good feedback from parents and teachers. I'm now a valuable member of the staff - especially being a casual maybe too valuable to let go!!
Getting a certificate for all the hours put into becoming Reading Recovery Teacher.
A good scheme as it covers whole language. Not one second can be wasted in a lesson. Great to have set format every day. I learned that phonics and sounding out aren't the be all and end all of learning how to read!!!

Bad Points:
Lots of pressure to accelerate kids, plus try to comprehend all the jargon, especially in the first six months. Too many grey hairs, loss of weight, loss of sleep and irregular periods due to Reading Recovery and expectations.
The Tutor was a hard task mistress. Never gave answers to problems just kept referring me back to the "Bible" even though I'd read the damn thing inside out and back to front. A lack of direction and help when I was desperate and crying out for it. (Always over my two slow readers that I've had on the program all year.)
After most Tuesday arvo sessions I felt depressed and often had a few tears.

Having to keep the kids on all year even though their reading acceleration only crawled along. I'm sick of them coming in the door and so are the kids. We are up to 140 lessons, 70 hours. I feel that at least another two kids were deprived of a second chance to read. Thank goodness it won't be the case next year.
Not enough visits by the Tutor to see us in the schools to give us helpful advice. The first few months would have been a lot easier if we could have seen a Reading Recovery lesson in it's entirety.
It's been tough but worth it.

The teachers confided that they experienced great frustration with these 'slow to recover children'.

> Well one has been on the whole year. I've got him up to level 15 but it's been a struggle all the way. I've got another who is extremely difficult , who just cannot remember from one day to the next, if he turns over the page and he says he's forgotten. I find that very frustrating, then there will be a bit of a breakthrough. But there's not great leaps , it's sort of tiny little hops with him.

The pressure from the lack of progress was felt not only by the teachers but also by the children and their parents.

> One child in particular I got a real block with and I couldn't stand the sight of him coming into the room and I know he couldn't stand the sight of me. I felt sorry for his poor mum who kept on saying, 'Well when does it come to an end?' because she was sick of it too.

These feelings of pressure and stress were sometimes vented by the teachers as they struggled to 'push' the children to make progress. Rather than release their feelings their actions seemed to heighten the pressure they felt when struggling to accelerate a 'difficult child'.

Journal entry 7/9/91

> What a shame that this job has brought out the worst in me. I have to stop myself saying things to children that I would never normally say. I realise it is frustration that is causing this. Yes I go back to the book for inspiration. Poor Robert, he finds it very difficult to remember and to hurry. I'm always hounding him, his saliva dries up and he finds it hard to speak but always goes away in good spirits. It's his teacher who feels remorseful for the rest of the day.

Tutor support

For teachers with children who were 'difficult to recover' the fortnightly in-service sessions were perceived as contributing to their rising levels of stress. As the year progressed most of the teachers began to discontinue children from the program. The period of time the children were enrolled in the Reading Recovery program varied from child to child. Some were discontinued after only ten to twelve weeks, while the average length of stay was fifteen weeks (Vains, 1991, p.4.). However, children who were 'difficult to recover' stayed on the program for over thirty weeks. During the training sessions the teachers were asked to nominate children they felt were ready to be discontinued so the Tutor could review procedures for the school.

Extracts from Wendy's Journal

First Entry (February)
I first came across Reading Recovery at a talk given at the Lismore Workers Club. I was interested enough to get Marie Clay's book and read it. Both the Support Teacher and I spent a day at a local school looking at what they were doing with a similar program. It was about that time that we heard about this course and applied to attend. We knew nothing about the course until the second last day of the school year.

So we came to the first introduction day with lots of questions about how we could manage to organise such a program in our school. The three of us left that meeting keen enough to try to tackle the huge problem of organising it.

One of the other Infants teachers attended the first day with me and she has been wonderful. She is very supportive, gives me lots of encouragement and I know I can depend on her all year. She is hoping to take over next year. Together we have talked to staff members and tried to get the support we knew we would need. Some staff members had hoped to have remediation for their class and are not happy with the lack of funds to do both. They feel we should not have to forgo what we already have but that if the Region wish to introduce Reading Recovery they should be able to fund it. Not at the expense of the other children in the school.

Fortunately twelve of our sixteen staff can see the need for a better system and are prepared to give Reading Recovery a go in the hope of solving the problem of how to help those children who need remediation year after year. I hope to gain results good enough to drastically reduce the number of children needing extra help, in fact wipe out the problem completely.

Last Entry (December)
I am sad to see the end of this year and that's a first in my teaching career. I have found it such a rewarding year. Not easy by any means. Every fortnight I would arrive full of confidence and happy with the progress the Reading Recovery children were making and with the progress I was making. This state of bliss didn't last long. The Tutor managed to question all the assumptions I was comfortable with and I would spend the next fortnight coming to terms with the new questions she placed in my mind. With each in-service I have grown professionally and personally. This was an unexpected gain. I thought I would learn some new teaching techniques but not question the basic assumptions about how children learn that I had held for many years.

Now the training year is ending I feel confident enough to continue to learn on my own (with support from other Reading Recovery teachers and the Tutor) next year but no doubt the Tutor will manage to shatter that illusion sometime before the end of the day, and throw me into another state of confusion and I will need to spend the holidays coming to terms with it. However, I've loved it and I wouldn't change a thing. The opportunity for on-the- job training has been excellent and a first for me. A very rewarding and powerful way to undergo training. The Tutor has managed to challenge me continually, never allowing me to ease up.

My class has benefited as well. I have found after testing for Reading Age (which I did only for interest) that a much greater than expected number of children have a reading age that is above their chronological age and all the children except four I have not had time to work with in Reading Recovery have a reading age expected for their chronological age. I feel this is attributed to my Reading Recovery training and adopting this for my classroom teaching.

A big thank- you to everyone involved in making Reading Recovery possible and to the Tutor for her support and guidance.

Watching other teachers nominating children week after week became demoralising for three teachers who were struggling with children who were 'slow to make progress'.

> I guess that's what happens in the training year, if you do have difficult children you do keep on with them for the year but the stress was very hard to take. To go back to the course when everyone was getting really wonderful results and I was sitting back saying - well , I'm really trying . I am reading the handbook and I am doing all these things. Why isn't it happening for me?

As the teachers recognised that the children they were teaching seemed to be unusually difficult to accelerate they requested advice from the Tutor.

> For most of the year there have been two children that I've been struggling with so much. I felt that I needed more help. I was really asking for more help all the time.

The support requested by the teachers was usually related to a question they had regarding a child's limited progress. The teachers also requested visits from the Tutor if they found a problem or child particularly difficult to manage.

> There's been a fair bit of pressure. The Tutor hasn't given a lot of answers, we've had to find them ourselves which I've found very difficult as far as always referring back to the book. I've read the book and I've read the book and I still can't work out the problem. No...it hasn't been easy. It's taken its toll.

> We'll have a problem, it's usually with a child you know, a child's not moving how we'd like them to and we'll mention this problem (to the Tutor) and we are told a source where we can find the solution. We are never told the solution. And I think that does frustrate some (teachers). I think that's a very good ploy, a very good teaching strategy but I think there's a time when some of us really need an answer. Especially if it's a recurring problem and we've gone to the sources and we've gone through the procedures that have been suggested and we still don't feel that we're getting there. I think that does cause certain people some stress.

The Tutor recognised that some of the teachers found her reluctance to provide answers and her refusal to give demonstration lessons frustrating. However, she strongly stated that although her teaching methods might produce feelings of unease and even increase the teacher's feelings of frustration, she felt redirecting the teachers to seek their own answers was ultimately for their benefit. The long term goal for the Reading Recovery teachers was to be able

Extracts from Freda's Journal

First Entry (February)
Reading Recovery brings to me a feeling of excitement as I work at something new - perhaps I need a new challenge! I hope to get a much greater understanding of the reading behaviours of children and how I can help children who have not had success.

At the present time I feel frustration at trying to "fit it all in". There hasn't been much time at school to practice the running records so I still feel "inadequate." I have a Kindergarten who are learning to adapt to the fact that I'm not always there, although they love the teacher who takes them.

I'm very fortunate to have the backing of every member of the staff -though they were quite happy for me to be the one who "wore out".

I've always felt somewhat "inadequate" when people say what wonderful things they've done in this or that. It was good to feel completely at ease with the group of Reading Recovery Teachers as everybody voiced their own problems and feelings of inadequacies. My expectations are high as are the schools - I hope I don't let them down!

Last Entry (December)
What a great year it's been now that I've come to the end I can say it's been great. I have learned so much, not only about reading , but how to cope!! There were many frustrating times through the year. Times I felt bogged down and I wondered if I would ever be successful with the children - however, I did make it and the children appear so pleased with their efforts. They know they can read. Still working with a couple of difficult children - they will still be in Reading Recovery next year for a little while, but they are so enthusiastic to get there!!

The parents have been very supportive, if not always as helpful as could be. Next year I'll have to be more definite with parents and what is expected from them. This goes, too, with the staff. I've been working with children from two classes and the more experienced teacher was more aware of the way children work back in the class.

I've had some lows in my personal life and at that time I wasn't that aware that I wasn't working as effectively as I might have been. I worked on "automatic" at that time and the children certainly didn't progress rapidly. However, I worked through all that and everything is okay now.

I feel now as if all the fragments are coming together and everything is making much more sense now. I'm so pleased that I've had a chance to be part of this program.

There's been plenty of stress along the way- not only with the in-services , (Oh! so much went on each fortnight) but stress with coping with my class and working with another teacher (who is very competent) also had to be dealt with.

Every Tuesday spent at the in-services was followed by being a "Zombie" at home that night. I was such good company!!

to teach self sufficiently with confidence and autonomy. This goal was kept to the fore by the Tutor. She firmly believed that by providing answers for the teachers she would actually be undermining their teaching competence.

> I would have been hesitant to have supported (the Teachers) any more...What they would like I suppose is more teacher visits.....for me to go out and visit them. Well, if I do that I'm working against making these people independent.....working through their own theories and coming to terms with what's happening on their own. In a couple of instances I guess they would like me to answer their questions straight out rather than saying - well, where could you go to find out about it? What do you think? Right...now what do you think about it? ...And again these teachers have got to be thinking teachers. They've got to work through these things in their mind and I'm not always going to be beside them so it's that independence again. They have to know how to go about solving their own problems....

Not all the teachers found the Tutor's methods stressful and frustrating. Many appreciated that she was deliberately ignoring their pleas for help so that they would learn to become independent Reading Recovery teachers.

> The Tutor was great. She was like someone that knew nothing. That was the part that fascinated me. She is an incredible lady. She distanced herself all the time. We were never given an answer you know. She used to say - there are no answers in Reading Recovery. There are no answers. You were fed to the lions you had to find it out for yourself. And that's what we did. We sat amongst ourselves and sussed it out for ourselves. But she put in all the information. The input was fantastic. I think she's an incredible person, she really is. How she put up with us and was so gentle with us all.........and I'd think - she must want to kick us out because we'd sit with silences and wouldn't know what to come up with. But she wouldn't feed it back so we simply had to find an answer. It was like being locked in. Until you found the key you couldn't get out.

The In-service Course

'Learning on the job' and having a fairly 'tight lesson format' to follow were features of the Reading Recovery in-service course which appealed to the majority of teachers. Teachers who had previously taught in support teacher roles found these features of the Reading Recovery program particularly reassuring.

Extracts from Theresa's Journal

First Entry (February)
Immediately I heard about Reading Recovery I was interested to "give it a go." The Tutor assured me I wouldn't be disappointed. For many years of my teaching children with learning difficulties have challenged me. There has always been a soft spot within me to give of my best to them. If Reading Recovery will develop skills within me to assist the children in their early years I will have a very rewarding conclusion to my teaching vocation.

The course will be challenging for me in lots of ways. I put high expectations on myself and tend to lose confidence when I feel I'm not performing satisfactorily.

The group atmosphere gives me great courage. I feel comfortable so far. I know a lot will be expected of me from staff members. So far they are very supportive and it's up to me to keep it that way. Thanks to the Principal for his whole-hearted support in seeing to my needs so promptly. I appreciate that.

Last Entry (December)
A whole-hearted thanks for a most wonderfully fruitful year with eight excited children who have given me the greatest boost of my teaching career. I've enjoyed the challenges and even the hard or impossible times because they were all growth experiences.

Happy children are a delight and that's what Reading Recovery has done for our lucky Year Ones.

I would not have missed the opportunity to be part of this in-service. The friendly spirit among the teachers has been a wonderful experience, I feel that an ongoing progression of support will be there for me. I have loved this course and thanks.

> I've loved the training and the information that I've been given and the opportunity to work with the children and learn as I go along. All that process I've thought has been very good
>
> Now I am feeling confident. And it's a good program. I particularly like it because there's not a minute wasted in it because it's half an hour intense and you're covering the whole language and it's an easy format to follow. The kids like the routine of it....They know they have to write the story now. I feel it's been very successful because I've had something to follow. Instead of using my own ideas and my own innovations I had set things to do and I knew that I had to do them, so I feel as though not even a second was wasted during the lesson.

Others features of the training program such as 'teaching behind the screen' and the questioning stance of the Tutor were acknowledged by the teachers as being 'powerful' training techniques. However, these aspects of the training were also found to be 'harrowing', 'traumatic' and occasionally counter productive.

> I don't know about anyone else .....I wish that I'd had a lot more answers or a lot more direction......If I was doing something wrong to be just told straight out 'Look you did this , this was wrong, try this way'. Rather than you're told that you're doing it wrongly but you need to look at what else you can do. ....I think being a bit more directed would have helped.....I just wished I'd had a few answers ...I think I was reinforcing ... the way I was approaching the children, I was probably holding them back. I think what I was doing was one of the reasons (the children) took so long.

The teachers viewed 'teaching behind the screen' as a necessary ordeal to be endured for the benefit of others.

> I found that just so traumatic teaching behind the screen. I felt it was worth it watching others. It was a very, very powerful way to learn. But I don't think that the teacher behind the screen got enough out of it. I think the others certainly did. I know I did. I learnt so much while others were there behind the screen and the Tutor would say - 'You don't do that do you?' We learnt so much by watching others but I really don't think the teacher behind the screen, for the trauma that she went through, got enough out of it.

Although the teachers found the fortnightly in-service sessions 'intense', 'exhausting' and 'stressful' they were heartened by the Tutor's encouragement that the results the group was achieving were of an excellent standard in comparison to other groups around Australia.

Extracts from Belinda's Journal

First Entry (February)

I have always accepted that Reading Recovery is a valuable program and consequently have not taken much notice of the doubts expressed, the promotions etc., over the past couple of years as it has struggled to take off here. I had no idea that I would ever be involved until late last year. In some ways I feel bad about my selection as another teacher was really keen to do it but refused to go onto First class. That teacher now transferred , but I sense some bad feeling from staff.

I have come to terms very quickly with the fact that I will be teaching my children very little, although I'm happy with the teacher employed to replace me. I was part of the interviewing process. I am happy that I will still plan the language and am equally happy to give the maths/science to the other teacher on the class.

I feel a huge responsibility for the children in the class- for their reading progress and am worried that I may lose touch with their writing. I have always been available to my children and parents- now I feel I may have to shut them out to survive.

I feel wonderfully enthusiastic about this , feel relaxed with the Tutor and the rest of the group. Perhaps I may find it makes me slow down a bit.

Last Entry (December)

Shifted rooms yesterday. A room with a ghastly smell, I think it was an ex-clinic, perhaps that's what had a strange effect on two of the children. One child began to stutter and would not concentrate. It is quite a noisy room- no carpet in the room or outside in the corridor however, it will be much better to be next year as it is attached to the First class room and time will be saved. This year I have had to go and get the children, which means that I have to go over into play time. I had a mum turn up today to watch her child do a lesson. She was supposed to come last Friday. She was so thrilled that her child has had the opportunity to be on the program. He will be off early next year.

I've found I've been able to talk to parents about things in reading that really matter. Things that I know will help them when they hear their child read.

I am looking forward so much to next year. I feel that I can achieve more with the children being in the classroom full-time and taking a couple of children in my release time. I guess I'm too old, no longer have the patience I had. I feel this is the role that will work best for me and I can give my support to our new teacher in training. One thing I love is the wonderful relationship I have with the parents of my discontinued children and their mums - this is strong and very satisfying.

I have been rather unhappy with the class situation as far as Reading goes. I don't think the children have had a fair go and am grateful for the continuing support of the parents even though they have not been happy.

Looking back it has been a difficult year - problems personally have not made it any easier but I would not have changed it for the world. Thank you to the Tutor for putting up with my whining.

> Sometimes I find the in-service sessions stressful. It's the manner, it's the manner of the (Tutor). But) it's paying off, we can all see that it pays off but it's just so intense and so full on. We feel, I think I feel, and speaking to the others too, that the Tutor's manner is obviously getting results through us because of the number of kids that are discontinuing but its, ... you feel as though you've got nothing left inside after an in-service day. Everything is being dragged out all the time and bang, bang, bang, bang you know one after the other. There's no recovery time if you know what I mean? And this is especially in the, session where we're observing through the screen and I guess that could be (called) stressful.

Teaching Loads

Learning on the job was part of 'being a Reading Recovery teacher.' The training program involved more than just attending the in-services and teaching four children for half an hour per day. The time allocated to the teachers for Reading Recovery varied slightly. Several part-time teachers were on a .6 load while the classroom teachers were on a .5 load. The difference between having a few minutes between lessons to jot down progress notes and 'having to rush the children through bang, bang, bang' with no time to 'even sneeze' was noted by all the teachers. They found that particularly in the training year a Reading Recovery teacher required more than just two hours a day to adequately cover their duties. A part-time teacher on a .6 load explained how she managed her typical Reading Recovery day.

> Well I arrive at school at recess and I have fifteen minutes before my first child comes in. I am ready to take them but things around the school are happening and they're not quite in their classrooms yet. So I just set everything up you know, I rearrange the magnetic letters or just physical things that I can do. Then I have my four children consecutively, one after the other. There's a lunch break in between. When the last child is done I would have time then to plan the next day. Set up the lesson plan, choose the books for the next day. Fill in some of the lesson plan notes as you go. I fill them in but I might expand on them a little bit (at the end of the day). Everything is done on the run during the actual lesson.

This teacher found her load manageable. She recognised that she enjoyed the 'luxury of extra time as a .6', so she was able to complete the basic paper work and review the children's progress whilst at school.

Extracts from Rebecca's Journal

First Entry (February)

When I was asked if I would like to have the opportunity to train as a Reading Recovery teacher I was very, very excited. I was flattered, I guess, that I had been selected because I had heard of Reading Recovery and I knew that the success of the program itself was very dependent on the teacher selected. I had always seen children in my class who needed special programs. I tried, as best I could in the circumstances to give these children extra help, etc., but you feel you are getting nowhere fast.

When it was announced at a staff meeting that we would be partaking in the program and that I was the teacher to be involved, there was an undercurrent of jealousy, I guess, 'Why her?' 'What has she got that I don't have?' etc., etc. Most of the staff are very happy about the whole idea, but there are a few who are quite peeved. On a personal level I can rise above this - my only concern is that it may affect the success of Reading Recovery in our school, though I don't think it will get to that.

From this course I expect to gain a very clear understanding of how children learn to read and write, the strategies they use, the stages they go through. I want to know exactly where each child is up to in their progress. I want to be very successful as a Reading Recovery teacher. I would like to see the children involved feeling fantastic about coming to Reading Recovery and also succeeding from Reading Recovery. I would like to be able to hear Marie Clay speak if she ever comes to this country, I already have great respect for the lady.

My school expects that initially four children will become independent readers and writers and that as the years go on many, many more children will be successful and that in the future there will be no need for remediation for children who continue to fail year after year.

My thoughts are mixed - I'm excited, hesitant - I hope I can live up to my own expectations in my performance as teacher and as learner. I like coming together with the group. As yet I'm still a bit shy to chat too much - I like listening to the others. I'm glad I don't teach in a state school - all the problems they talk about re programming, replacement teachers, etc., are non existent in our school. Presentation is great - the pace so far in the classes is good. I'm able to understand the information thus far.

Last entry (August)

Reading Recovery is going well. I seem to be now more in control of the lesson, itself. I feel that I understand why I am doing the various lesson parts.

We have three children who have completed the course and are now reading well. I have started four new children onto the program and all are making progress. We are roaming around in the known at present - and all are really showing some of the early strategies for reading.

Not all the part-time teachers had this 'luxury' of school time in which to complete their paper work. During the training year there was a 'considerable amount of paperwork' which had to be completed after each lesson and at peak times during the year when children were entering the program or being discontinued.

> It has been a really hard year because the pressure has been on us to get this going. I'd say, for the evaluation data that we had to have by Monday, I spent all day Sunday at the table working on it. The diagnostic summaries and the observations - you spend two, three, four hours on those per child, to do all that. Taking home the lesson notes, what we've done today, seeing what the child can do. You're looking at an hour a day perhaps extra on each child. The other girls who've got a classroom too they can't spend that time, that's why they're really stressed out, we're all stressed out.

The time constraints and the associated stress felt by the part-time teachers was minimal in comparison to the full-time classroom teachers. These teachers spoke about 'constantly rushing' from one teaching space to the next, of scarcely being able to manage their 'heavy loads' and of having to 'take home all the paper work' as there just wasn't time to complete any during school hours.

> Even with the four children you didn't get a break between those. You weren't allowed any time extra at all, not even to choose the books for the next day. It had to be done after school and any reading you had to do at night and the checking of lessons had to be done at night. I run out of that room and I'm straight back into the classroom. No I just don't have the time to do anything else. I have to take it home to do (the paperwork).

The part-time Reading Recovery teachers were constantly amazed that others in the group were teaching Reading Recovery and in addition had classroom teacher loads.

> I don't know how fulltime teachers do it. I really don't. I have found it stressful enough just being .6 let alone going back into a classroom. I really don't know how they can do it and do justice in their classroom as well. I know that I'd be just zonked. You find that you're so exhausted by the time you've done the Reading Recovery and then to have to go into your classroom and to program for the classroom and do the reports for the classroom, especially this time of the year when it is report time. I think you're so aware you say - gosh they've got reports to do as well and here we are doing all this testing and whatever and I don't know how they do it, I really don't.

A classroom teacher who was also an executive member of staff spoke frankly of the impact the combination of duties had had on her personal and professional life. It was a memorable year but not one she wished to repeat.

> I don't think I've ever had a year like that. I think probably in hindsight........being an executive is probably not the best thing and that's been hard and I haven't been able to do anything at the school, you know I've had to do all my Reading Recovery work at home and that's been a trial for your own life as well. It's been full on here.

Although the teachers found the paperwork to be an added burden they acknowledged that taking home programming was 'just part of being a teacher'. Most of the teachers felt that a little extra time, 'just half an hour extra each day', would ease the load of daily record keeping and would improve the quality of their teaching.

> Ideally, I'd like ten minutes after a child left, ten minutes between each child just to go over the running record and do some analyses, because, as much as you think you'll remember (you don't). I used to do it as soon as I got home in the afternoon, you still forget things - but, if I could do it straight after a kid left, get the next kiddie's books out and just have a glance through what's going to happen, I think I could do that in ten minutes and then start (again).

Communicating with parents and staff

Additional time could be used to improve the Reading Recovery program by keeping parents and staff more fully informed of the children's progress. Monitoring children once they had been discontinued from the program was an additional duty the teachers were supposed to squeeze into their hectic schedules. For one Year One classroom teacher this monitoring was easily achieved as she observed the child in her classroom. For other classroom teachers the monitoring was not as easily achieved. Some felt swamped by the demands of the rest of their class so monitoring children from the Reading Recovery program had to done on the run at the end of the day. For classroom teachers not on a Year One class finding time to monitor the 'discontinued' children was a difficult task which they were not able to include in their load until the end of the year. The part-time teachers also found their monitoring of the children's progress was constrained by their teaching commitments. However, again the flexibility of their position was helpful. They were able to 'visit the classes to keep an eye on the children's reading' or they had established a 'home book borrowing system' so the Reading Recovery children could continue to visit the teacher before school. One part-time teacher made use of every spare minute by 'calling for discontinued students when one of the enrolled Reading Recovery students was away.'

Communicating with parents was considered by the Reading Recovery teacher to be helpful for the children's continued progress. The teachers tried to inform the parents early in the program and to gain their support. One of the most successful means of enlisting the parents support was to invite the parents in to watch a lesson. Not only did the parents learn from these visits but the teachers were also able to gain insights into a child's particular difficulties as this Reading Recovery teacher discovered.

> I like to have the parent back in again at the end when the child is ready to leave me. It's been very good because they can see what the child's doing... I'd been having trouble with Kim getting her to monitor her work and when her father came in he monitored everything for her. I thought this is why I've been having so much trouble. If I'd realised that was happening with parents I could have stopped it then...So next year, you've got to have them at the beginning, I'd like to have them half way through just to check what the parents are doing and then have them again at the end.

Communicating with the parents also provided teachers with sometimes startling realisations that the Reading Recovery program was reaching an even wider audience than expected.

> Emily whose mother came to watch. She comes in and has a look at what's doing but I didn't know that her mother was illiterate at this stage. And when Emily got up to about level 5, the stories that had words that were just that little bit more difficult and mother came in one morning and said - this is wonderful, she's the eldest in the family. Emily is teaching me how to read and write. Emily's mum told me that she is illiterate and now the mother is learning to write and to learn from Emily and I thought that was great.

All the teachers commented that they wanted to improve their communication with the parents the following year. During their training year many had found the time constraints too limiting but they anticipated that in the future involving the parents would be come a higher priority if time permitted.

Communicating with staff and informing them about the success of Reading Recovery was undertaken by all of the teachers in an informal way during morning tea breaks. Several of the part-time teachers made a more concerted effort to inform all staff about the children's progress as they were conscious that being part-timers limited the informal opportunities to 'spread the word'. The teachers displayed 'wall charts of the children's progress', sent memos to staff advertising the children's achievements and invited their fellow teachers to observe a lesson when they could spare a half an hour. In several schools where the opportunities for teachers to attend Reading Recovery lessons was impeded by a lack of release time the Reading Recovery teachers took the children to the staffroom to display their new literacy confidence.

> I've taken the children, because I start early at half past eight. The others are still in the staffroom having a cup of coffee or whatever and especially when the children are getting close to discontinuing, I've brought them up to read to the other members of staff and they've said , 'Gosh, that little (one has improved)'. Especially the two (children) that wouldn't speak. The teachers had never heard them read before and here they were reading in front of everybody. So I've taken them to the staffroom to read. I've had their charts on the wall so teachers have said, 'Oh, look how they're going.' I don't know, the teachers just take a real interest.

Keeping staff informed had a flow on benefit for some of the Reading Recovery teachers. Teachers who observed a Reading Recovery lesson expressed admiration for the teacher's patience, 'like how can you sit there with silence like that' as the child struggled to read. In some schools as the staff became more aware of the pressure the Reading Recovery teacher was placed under they offered practical support.

> The Principal came down to watch and listen and she sort of thought - gosh, you really are running because you've got to be finished to do playground so she took me off playground which was beaut which was, you see, they're looking after me again. The Principal said 'If there is any way that we can help you, we will. Just say and we will do it.' They've just been marvellous.

The support and recognition accorded to this teacher was not the norm. In other schools the teachers felt 'isolated,' 'lonely' and largely 'ignored'. In these schools the Reading Recovery teachers found little understanding from their peers and executive staff. While the teachers recognised that it was hard for those not involved in Reading Recovery to appreciate the stress they found themselves enduring, they became even more reluctant to communicate their needs for support.

> To a lot of people it is hard for them to know what you are going through especially a person like the Principal and the primary

> teachers. They thought that I was having a lovely time......only got one child you know and they thought it was fantastic. To make those people really understand I don't know.........I tried at one stage and I really think they thought that I was a bit of a pain in the neck really.
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> Some primary teachers were not particularly interested to hear anything that I had to say about Reading Recovery and I think sometimes that made me less keen to present things at staff meetings. It's very lonely. You're stuck in a room with one child. Not lonely I guess but you don't get to know what's happening in the school. It's a very isolating, I guess that is more the word than lonely, 'isolating' position.

Benefits of Reading Recovery over remedial programs.

Reading Recovery was initially criticised by a number of schools as too expensive and selective. By the end of the year several Reading Recovery teachers reported that their schools had begun to see the long term possibilities of Reading Recovery.

> Well, I deal with Year Six at the moment and it's the worst class that has ever gone through this school. There are about twelve boys in that class, and that's what's made me think. If they could have learnt to read they wouldn't be disrupting the class the way they are. It makes me want to cry to look at those children who have been sent to me for one day a week over the last five years. I've seen them you know, one day a week and they've gained nothing. You know their self esteem is down . A whole lot of teachers here can see what we're doing. Even the 5/6 teacher said 'Oh it's worth having someone like that (a Reading Recovery teacher). It's worth releasing a teacher if it's going . . . . .if we're going to benefit later on.

The teachers had become convinced of the importance of the targetted age group of six years and the intensive nature of the 'recovery ' intervention. These conditions of the program came to be considered by the Reading Recovery teachers as essential elements of the program rather than weaknesses opening the program to criticism.

> The children love it. They see it as a reward of something special that other children miss out on . . . . They don't feel negatively about it and I think that is one of the pluses of Reading Recovery being geared to this level. I think very soon after infants children had the reverse attitude towards withdrawal - they're not as good as the other children. As I say, many of the others in the class are envious that they don't come.

> I had one of the little girl's brothers . . . I had him in remedial classes and I couldn't get anywhere with him . . . . . . I only had him once a week and that's how I feel that Reading Recovery out weighs all these other (remedial programs) because of the consistency with the children.

Reading Recovery teachers who had been Support teachers for a number of years prior to their training were exuberant in their praise of Reading Recovery. At last they were able to target the meagre 'remedial' resources in their schools and achieve results that had previously eluded them year after year. Finally these teachers were able to gain a real measure of satisfaction from seeing the children they taught return to the classroom as confident independent readers and writers.

> I've been Learning Difficulties Support teacher for five years and without a class. Last year I did a lot of team teaching which I thought was fairly useless and a lot of patch up work with children that I saw year after year after year.
>
> I just found that when I was a Learning Difficulties Support teacher and I was spread through the school I was just a band-aid. There was no satisfaction for me for a start and I saw the same kids year after year.

Being a classroom teacher and a Reading Recovery teacher

As documented in this report, six of the teachers in the training group maintained classroom teaching positions. One of these teachers became ill during the year and chose to resign from her full time teaching load continuing with her Reading Recovery duties on a part-time basis. The literacy teaching strategies learned during the Reading Recovery training were utilised by the remaining five classroom teachers in their Infants classrooms. The teachers on Year One found that they maintained realistic expectations of the children in Reading Recovery because they were continuously in contact with fluent readers of the same age group.

> Well, the advantages of being a (Year One teacher) are that you seem to know what to expect from the children. Your expectations aren't unrealistic.

However, a majority of the classroom teachers did not feel that the advantages of maintaining their classroom role compensated for the extra workload. Those

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on classes other than Year One felt their classroom role was of no benefit to their teaching either in Reading Recovery or as a classroom teacher.

> I don't really think it's been a help at all. I really don't. The fact that I'm a classroom teacher. Maybe that I should be a Year One teacher. I've been on Kindergarten for the last two years so I haven't been looking or going back to the classroom dealing with the same children that I'm working with or dealing with better readers really.

All the classroom teachers found that the joint roles increased their workloads to unacceptable levels. This was particularly the case during critical times of the year such as the commencement or end of each term.

> It's very difficult at this time of the year when I'm testing the class as well as Reading Recovery children. Well, the Year One I have, we've just completed testing for the end of the year. (It's) report time and all the rest. So (I have) double the workload. It is stressful and right from the beginning I had my reservations about whether a classroom teacher was the best person to do it.

The teachers felt that their classroom teaching performance suffered because of the demands of their new Reading Recovery role.

> Well I was happy to be involved but as time went on I didn't realise how difficult it was trying to manage a class and do Reading Recovery as well. Just the amount of organisation made it extremely difficult....This year I've had to tell (children from my class) to go away and it hasn't been very nice. I've felt I've let the parents down and the kids down. I haven't done the things I wanted to do. I couldn't, I just didn't have the time.

The classroom teachers expressed regret that they had not been able to 'spend more time getting to know the children in my class'. They reported feeling 'guilty' that their classrooms had been 'duller' than usual and that the parents of children in their class had been almost 'strangers this year.' The teachers missed their classrooms and their classroom teaching duties.

> I worried about the class when I wasn't there and I didn't think things were being done that I think should have been done and the work wasn't getting covered.

Even when the teachers were pleased with the release arrangements and the children in their classes seemed to be have progressed well, the teachers expressed regret that it had not been an exciting year for the children. Finding time to plan with their co teachers was difficult and this contributed to the teachers' feelings of guilt.

> Well, we haven't done a great deal of planning. That comes into feeling guilty as well. We'd talk about what we're doing and at the beginning we were organising things together and tying them in and then very quickly (the co teacher) took over her strands and went her way and I did my language work and we'd tie it in and talk about it but we haven't spent a great deal of time getting together and actually sitting down and planning it. Mainly because there hasn't been that time there for either of us to do it.

One teacher in the group was in a unique position, having combined classroom teaching duties and Reading Recovery in the early part of the year and then changing to being a part-time Reading Recovery teacher following a mid-year illness. Her comments summarise the differences expressed by the two groups of teachers undertaking the Reading Recovery training.

> Well, I find it a lot less pressure (now as a part-time Reading Recovery teacher). I find that I can give more time to Reading Recovery obviously because I haven't got to tear around to make sure I'm all organised for a class in the afternoon. I haven't got programming to do for the class and that sort of thing so it does give me more time. If I don't leave the Reading Recovery room on time it doesn't matter whereas before I had to because you might have had photocopying to do or you had to prepare things for the afternoon craft. So I find it is a lot less pressure and I find that I have a lot more time and I find it more relaxing too. I don't have to tear out to do lunch duty and then tear into a classroom full of children and all the demands that go with that. You've got thirty less children that you've worrying about which is thirty less parents that you're worrying about as well. So I'm finding it a lot less pressure.

Looking into the future

As the final interviews with the teachers drew to a close they were asked to predict how long they were prepared to continue as Reading Recovery teachers. Their replies were most telling. Of the six teachers who combined their classroom role with that of Reading Recovery, one teacher was prepared to continue using the same model the following year. She saw her commitment to the dual position 'as being unlimited' although she had taken heed of the Tutor's warning that 'people do become drained after two or three years', but for the present she stated that she was 'quite happy to keep going.'

The teacher who had become ill during the year was prepared to continue as a part-time Reading Recovery teacher and could conceive of remaining in the position for at least another five years.

> I could envisage that I would like to see these Year One's when they are in Year Six. I would like to think that I could take a whole school through Reading Recovery that you could have a whole school recovered. I would envisage that is what I'd like to see. So basically five or six years of Reading Recovery. By then I'll probably be too burnt out to teach it very well.

The remaining four teachers who had held classroom teaching positions wanted to return to their classrooms. One felt she would like to do Reading Recovery 'on and off forever' with breaks in between but she was reluctant to continue in the model they had adopted because she didn't 'want to get trapped as the Reading Recovery teacher.'

> I don't want to be the Reading Recovery teacher year after year. I'd like it to have quite a few teachers trained and I could do some of it each year and take a year off every couple of years.

In order to complete their training and become recognised as Reading Recovery teachers a two year commitment was required. The four teachers who opted not to continue the half time Reading Recovery and half time classroom teaching model were prepared to teach the minimum of two Reading Recovery children in their own time. In these schools it was anticipated that a second Reading Recovery teacher would be trained.

> For me, I'm going to do two children and we haven't really worked out how they're going to do it. They're talking about when the kindergarten children go home at a quarter to three, I will do a child then, that's sort of been established. I'm not sure when the other child is. They were talking about when my class is at TV. I really want something. A set time each day. . . . We desperately wanted another person trained. That was my recommendation anyway that I needed another person trained. . . . . .

Three of the teachers felt they were only prepared to commit themselves to Reading Recovery for another year. They were looking forward to a less stressful year as full-time classroom teachers.

> Hopefully we are going to train another teacher and I'm going to be taking two children in my own time one before school and one in my release time. But that's the way I'm going to work it because apparently I'm contracted for two years to do Reading Recovery. I have to get someone else because I just don't really think that I could

> cope with another year of doing it this way again. I couldn't....We (will) train another teacher who does four children. That way I can be on my class full time.
>
> I would like to go to kindergarten next year and put these ideas in place as soon as the children come to school and start to read.
>
> I can't wait till next year. I'm hoping that I've only got two children to concentrate on in Reading Recovery which will be lovely, I think, and more time for my class and not the hassles (of this year)....I'm really looking forward to next year. I think it will be lovely to concentrate on two children and get success with them and if they're not having success I'll get rid of them very early and to put a lot more back into my class.

A very different level of commitment to their future as Reading Recovery teachers was expressed by the teachers who had not carried the classroom responsibilities in addition to their Reading Recovery duties. All of these teachers intended to teach a full Reading Recovery load the following year and several were prepared to take on an additional child if given a .6 allocation. These teachers expressed long term commitment to their Reading Recovery position. They could see no end in sight and were hopeful of continuing in the role for an indefinite period although several did recognise that 'burn out' might force them to reconsider their commitment after another three or four years as a Reading Recovery teacher.

> My hope is that I can stay here . . . . . what I really want to do is stick with it for the next five years while it goes through the school and I would feel, you know like I said, that would be the end of my teaching career. I would be happy to bow out knowing that something as wonderful as this has been put into the school.
>
> Well, I'll do it again next year and hopefully the year after but I do know that they say you can't do it for too long, you need to get back into the classroom. I like doing Reading Recovery. I always enjoy working with the slowies, can I call them the slowies? I love working with children that have difficulties so I'd like to do it for a lot longer. Whether I do or not I don't know.
>
> I haven't given it a thought. I'm just very happy now and I'm very keen to get onto the next year and the next year because I think I'll improve and put more children through the program. I haven't really set a limit to it.

The teachers suggested that the part-time teaching role gave them greater flexibility and one teacher expressed resistance to the school's offer of additional teaching duties in the following year.

> It's continuing the same as now. They would like to offer me more work of an afternoon to make my day worthwhile. I'm not sure about that. I'm wondering whether I would rather finish then, have an hour here at school, an hour to do all my work so that my family is not suffering as much. I think Reading Recovery could be a full time job in a school, and it should be a full time position. Not so much that you take more children, you couldn't survive, but I've taken five and I find that's good. You could take six as a maximum. As long as you also have the rest of the day to do your book work.

Chapter 8.

Recommendations

During the final interviews, the key informants (the Reading Recovery teachers, Principals, and Assistant Principals) were asked to draw on their own experiences to make recommendations that would assist schools who were considering undertaking the Reading Recovery Program.

These recommendations are extensive and most comprehensive. They fall into three broad categories.

Recommendations regarding
- i) funding
- ii) school/community support
- iii) selection of the Reading Recovery Teacher.

Within each category there are several specific areas, as shown in Table 8.1 below. The frequency tabulation indicates the number of personnel making the recommendation which fall into each of these areas.

Table 8.1
Number of informants making recommendations in each category

Recommendation category	**Informants**		
	Principal	Assist. Principal	Reading Rec. Teacher
Funding			
Funding Reading Recovery Teacher	8	4	1
Resources for Reading Recovery Teacher	1	2	3
Needs Assessment	3	0	0
Total	**12**	**6**	**4**
School Community Support			
Staff Support for Reading Recovery Teacher	7	4	7
Parent Support for Reading Recovery Program	2	2	2
Staff Support for Reading Recovery Teacher	2	2	6
Total	**11**	**8**	**15**
Reading Recovery Teacher Selection			
Selection Procedures for Reading Recovery Teachers	2	3	0
Qualities/teaching duties for Reading Recovery Teacher	6	5	6
Total	**8**	**8**	**6**

The pattern of recommendations would appear to reflect the various school responsibilities of the informants and their predominant involvement in the Reading Recovery program. The Principals made numerous recommendations pertaining to the funding of the program. The Reading Recovery teachers were particularly forthcoming with advice regarding the level of staff support required for the teacher undertaking the Reading Recovery role. Assistant Principals were less focussed on support issues and more concerned, perhaps because of their supervisory role, with the person being selected as the Reading Recovery teacher and their duties.

The recommendations offered separated into

(a) issues for consideration prior to school involvement in the Reading Recovery program
(b) recommendations for consideration following a decision to adopt the program.

Recommendations

Prior to Reading Recovery Commitment

RECOMMENDATION 1

Thoroughly assess the school need for Reading Recovery

Assessment of the school's need for an early intervention literacy program was suggested as the first issue a school should consider prior to any decision to become involved in the Reading Recovery program. The Principals recommended that initial plans should be based on an assessment of the need for the program and that this need should be considered in relation to the schools goals.

> (Schools) have got to look at the total human resource allocation for the school and where the needs really lie. If, like our school, (they) believe that a number of children commence school from disadvantaged homes and therefore they're behind the eight ball anyway from a literacy viewpoint ...But other schools their needs may be very different, so I'd say, to summarise I guess they've got to assess the needs of their students and whether they can fund the program or not ...

RECOMMENDATION 2

Fully inform and consult with the school community prior to reaching any decision

Once the need for an early intervention literacy program is established, schools should begin to gather and share information about the Reading Recovery Program with their school community.

From the recommendations it is evident that **consulting with staff** about the Reading Recovery program was considered a priority by the Principals and the Reading Recovery teachers. It was suggested that staff be fully informed about the program before the school considered any commitment to Reading Recovery.

> First advice - before entry to Reading Recovery (information) would have to be fully communicated to the staff and I think that a Principal would be foolhardy to say 'Yes we'll go into Reading Recovery!' without having that communication with the people involved in the school community...That would be the best overall advice I could give.
>
> First of all the staff must be involved in the decision because it has a lot of ramifications within the school. The staff must be supportive. The staff need to own that decision that's made otherwise the program just wouldn't survive and I'm pleased that I went that way and we involved the staff fully in the decision at the beginning of the year and then again for next year when we made the decision a while ago.

The schools recommended a number of methods which had been used effectively to disseminate information about the program. It was suggested that establishing a firm base of staff and school community support was of utmost importance for any school contemplating the Reading Recovery program. The Principals recommended that schools fully inform staff of the benefits of the Reading Recovery program and of the consequences the adoption of the program may have for their classes.

> Schools need to make sure that their staff and community know what Reading Recovery is really all about. And I think they need to make sure that staff are clear on that also. That it does involve working with a particular group of children in the school and it involves working with them for the entire year, so that they will have virtually no time left if they use a Support Teacher Learning Difficulties to do any other work. A Support Teacher based on the number of days that I have here is the example that I'm working on.

> If they're taking a classroom teacher off, then they're going to have to realise that it's going to be a most demanding role for a classroom teacher.

The person chosen to present the initial information was an important concern. Some school personnel believed it should be an outside expert, others that it should be a well informed, committed school staff member. Initial information was best presented by an outside expert suggested one Reading Recovery teacher, based on the experience at her school

> I think Joan Smith had a big impact here. You see, most of our staff heard Joan when she came to speak. So you'd need people to come to the school and talk to the school and make them realise that it has to filter all the way down. It has to come from the top. It has to be peer support. It has to be support the whole way through. I think you probably need the Reading Recovery Tutor to come and talk.

An outside expert able to quote numerous studies and statistics detailing the success of the Reading Recovery program was seen as an effective way of convincing staff,

> Well, I think you've probably got to have a total commitment of the staff to back...to sell Reading Recovery. Yes, I really think you've got to get somebody in who's worked in the program, that's got statistics............People like statistics. You know you can talk but once they can see that this child started here and went to there, and there, I think that can convince them. I think if you can have somebody in that can explain that and get your whole staff (convinced).

Having a committed staff member play the key role in rallying support was an alternative process.

> The Principal needs to find out a bit about it and needs to really believe that it will work..... We made a bit of a commitment to it, subject to the staff knowing about it and accepting it, had a staff meeting to do that. I mean I've relied on the teacher to round up the support. Principals rely on other people considerably. It's not much good me going there and saying we are now going to do such and such, here's some information. The teacher got around and talked to people. We called all the staff together and teased it all out and made a commitment. It wasn't easy and there were a few anti people but we had a majority and we work on majorities

For that 'key person' in the particular school, the process had its limitations. From her perspective the school was not adequately informed.

> I guess the school could have been a bit more informed than our school was. The Tutor came and spoke to us. I don't know how it could have been done at our school any differently. Everyone was very sceptical anyway of the new program.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Seek additional funding support for the Reading Recovery teacher position

Principals offered the majority of recommendations pertaining to the funds required to release, or employ a teacher to teach the Reading Recovery program. They advised that schools contemplating the adoption of the Reading Recovery program should be aware that a .5 allocation of a teacher's duties was the minimum funding required.

> Well the bottom line is that you've got to find two hours a day....plus. Well, three hours a day would be .5. But it would be .5 because by the time you throw in an extra day every fortnight then, yes, you would be looking at point five. Now, that's half a teacher and that's a huge drain on your staff resources.

The Reading Recovery teacher from the same school suggested that even a .5 allocation was not always entirely satisfactory and that a .6 allocation may be more realistic.

> Probably a .6. Well look, you need your two hours a day plus one extra hour. That would be really good. You could even go for three and a half hours because I went over time with all of the lessons so the time just wasn't two hours. It was often two and a half, sometimes three hours. You've only got to go five or ten minutes over time with each of them and that catches up pretty well.

Funding the Reading Recovery teaching position was a constant source of stress for many of the Principals involved in the first year of Reading Recovery on the North Coast. In light of their experiences the Principals strongly recommended that schools seek additional funding support from the education systems. The Principals suggested that at least a .2 funding allocation should be sought.

> If you could get .2 or .3 and depend on that because if we do a hard year supporting the Reading Recovery teacher through next year and then I've got two others that I know are wanting to do it...........we're going to have these hard years and giving up and giving up and giving up for two, three or four years down the track you know, and maybe we'll keep training them if we're accepted because we're

> really committed to it. So if you do it without that .3, I would say .2 at the very minimum........ .3 would be great.....

The Principal, of a school that had received considerable funding from one of the education systems, was forthright in stating that schools should insist upon system funding support prior to making any commitment to the program.

> Well, the main one to look at is whether they can do it internally and my advice is that unless the additional time is available then they're going to do a lot of hurt to their schools. It's got to be a hurt somewhere and you can't do it because of restructuring, global budgeting, school councils and a whole new direction. I think that you're going to lose the reins there.

Alternatively, a Principal from a school of similar size which had not received any additional funds whole heartedly recommended initially adopting the program and subsequently seeking funding support from the education systems.

> If a Principal phoned me up and said - you know, what do I have to do? I would say - do whatever you have to get in there and then once it's in there then ask for more ..... And then you need to keep on asking for the extra resourcing once it's in because if it's seen to be successful once it's in well, the system has to come and help support us once it's in I believe and feel that will happen but it's painful initially.

Several Principals drew upon the experiences of their schools to specify the most useful source of funding. Vouchers were recommended as the preferred method of funding as they allowed the school considerable flexibility in staffing the Reading Recovery program.

> What has happened is that it's been disruptive for the Reading Recovery teacher's class to have three different people in there teaching during the year, plus the relief teacher going in there plus the librarian and parents involved in sport. She and I are agreed that we want only vouchers to see this going so that we can just make an arrangement with one person, one relief teacher only to come in for the whole year and I would recommend to any one considering it that this is the way that it should be done.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Adopting Reading Recovery needs to be a whole school decision reached after extensive consultation

The schools recommended a lengthy period of preparation and consultation prior to reaching a decision regarding the school's involvement in the Reading Recovery program. This consultation period should involve a needs assessment, followed by lengthy and extensive information sharing regarding the benefits of the program, implications for the whole school and funding requirements. The consultation process should precede any school decision to implement the Reading Recovery program.

Following School Commitment to the Reading Recovery Program

RECOMMENDATION 5

Open the Reading Recovery teaching position to applications from all staff

Once committed to implementing the Reading Recovery program, several further decisions are required.

A crucial decision which follows a school's commitment to introduce Reading Recovery is the selection of a Reading Recovery teacher. The recommended selection procedures include several steps. The first step is to publicise the position, to ensure all staff are familiar with the requirements of the position. Staff should then be invited to apply or nominate themselves for consideration. As one Principal explained, the selection procedure may involve interviews and consultation with the Reading Recovery Tutor.

> To let the staff have a say in nominating themselves if they wish but then to do as we're doing for next year and having each nominee interviewed. And the Tutor herself has helped make the final decision for the trainee for next year. That way if the staff feel that they're having an input I think they're more accepting of the program.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The person selected for Reading Recovery should possess personal qualities of patience, perseverance, be self-motivated and have sound communication skills.

The Principals, Assistant Principals and Reading Recovery teachers made specific recommendations regarding the suitability of persons for the Reading Recovery position. It was strongly recommended that the selected person be an experienced infants teacher. There was also general agreement concerning the personal qualities the 'right person' should possess.

A substantial number of recommendations highlighted the qualities of 'dedication' and 'commitment'. According to one Assistant Principal

> Well, you'd have to pick a very special person I would imagine. Our Reading Recovery teacher has a really good background with younger children and she's obviously a very competent person and she's just, in more recent years, she's upgraded professionally as well and everything that she does. You would have to have a person that would be prepared to put the effort in that she does.

The school representatives warned against selecting a teacher who viewed Reading Recovery as simply a credential to further his/her own career aspirations.

> I think it should be an experienced infant teacher who is highly motivated to do this job. I don't think a person should take on Reading Recovery for the sake of employment. It's too demanding and it's too important to the success of the program.
>
> I would be very, very wary in today's climate of picking someone who wanted to do it to add to their CV(curriculum vitae). I would be very, very wary about people who were trying to climb over other people to score points and because I don't see it as that sort of program. If you're not committed to it and you don't have a real deep abiding thing to improve reading then I don't think it would work somehow. I think those sorts of things are really important in a person

'A calm, patient manner', 'an ability to work in an intense one-to-one teaching situation' and be able to operate 'self sufficiently' in a school were additional important qualities a prospective Reading Recovery teacher should possess.

> I think it is very important too that the person who is chosen for it is somebody who is suited to it. It's very repetitive with some children

> . . . .I know with this particular teacher she can see some kiddies going along in leaps and bounds with others it's a struggle. I said to her at one stage - 'Do you find that you get bored with that?' And she said she found it a little bit wearing at times but she didn't get bored because she was so interested in seeing how things worked out. But I think the person who is taking it is the key to it.

These personal qualities were considered essential for successful one-to-one teaching. However, the position is not simply a teaching role. A real interest in learning and in particular, learning about the teaching of reading, was strongly recommended as a point to consider when selecting a teacher for training. A Principal commented

> They have to be dedicated and enthusiastic to do the task because a lot will be demanded of them. In talking to our Reading Recovery teacher and in talking to the supervisor I know that it's a demanding learning course for them. They'd be expected to read a lot, they'll be expected to work at a frenzied pace.

The stress of new learning and the level of commitment required during the training year were considered by several teachers when recommending that the person selected for training be resilient and articulate.

> You've got to explain yourself all the time, you know that the Tutor challenges. Somebody who reads a lot. Somebody who's prepared to devote that year, it's like a complete new training and it is. I mean it is a new training but probably that they've got to realise too that their class may not be the same, it's going to be different for the class. They can't expect to do the same things with the class that they're doing now. There's got to be some losses.

Several schools considered that the Reading Recovery position required considerable interpersonal and communication skills. Several recommendations suggested that the person be a 'popular member of staff' able to 'liaise well with members of the schools community'.

> I wouldn't pick an unpopular member of staff who people wouldn't support because people might judge the program from that. If I was just starting out I'd try to pick someone that was enthusiastic and committed sort of person by nature.

The schools recognised that the role is a taxing one, particularly during the initial training year.

As far as possible it was recommended that the teacher be free of other commitments. From her own experience a Reading Recovery teacher recommended

> Make sure that classroom teacher has no other responsibilities, just the class and that . . . . .They need somebody that can really throw themselves into it in the evening as well.

However, because of the intensity of the program it was also suggested that the teacher have outside interests, as another Reading Recovery teacher recommended

> If someone was going to take on Reading Recovery they need to have something to recover themselves. You know, I don't believe that you could just teach Reading Recovery. The Tutor told us that you need to be involved with other things as well and I thought - 'Oh this is a lot of phooey' but it is important that you're tapped into other things in the school as well.

RECOMMENDATION 7

While the person selected is engaged in training as a Reading Recovery teacher it is preferable if s/he does not also maintain a classroom teaching role. However, if s/he is a classroom teacher it is imperative that s/he be released from other duties and that the class release arrangements be consistent.

The majority of schools strongly recommended that the position not be a classroom teacher. This was one of the more contentious issues. When embarking on the Program some of the schools had thought the position had to be filled by a classroom teacher. Although the benefits of being in the classroom were recognised, the overwhelming recommendation was for the position not to be undertaken by a teacher who also had a class. A Principal recommended on the basis of the success his school had experienced that the teacher not be a classroom teacher because of the pressurised nature of the position.

> Choose the person wisely, and going back to what I said, not a classroom teacher, even though that is against one of the basic principles. Yes, I believe that we were fortunate that our Reading Recovery teacher is a very strong lady in herself. I'd say that a lesser person might have crumbled with the pressure. I have had reinforced in my mind this year that I wouldn't really want a full time classroom teacher involved with program because I think that the teacher could well suffer herself and I believe that it wouldn't be to the general advantage of the children in the class either.

However, it was recommended that the Reading Recovery teacher maintain contact with an infants class, particularly a Year 1 class as this Reading Recovery teacher explains.

> I think you need to be an experienced classroom teacher and I think it's necessary to get into the classroom for a while. Our aim is to make our kids good readers, not just proficient but good readers. I think if you're on Reading Recovery all the time you forget what good Year One readers sound like, you know, as a whole. So I think it's necessary that you get back into the classroom from time to time, say every few years perhaps, but I don't see it's essential to be a (fulltime) classroom teacher and a Reading Recovery teacher. But who am I to dispute what years of research have found?

A second Reading Recovery teacher stressed the importance of maintaining classroom contact.

> I think as long as you keep in touch with reading and what's happening with reading in the classroom I find it not a problem. I quite often go into reading and pop in. My little girl's in Kindergarten so I've spent quite a bit of time in there with reading with them too. So as long as you're prepared to keep in contact with reading and to hear good readers read. I think if you just became isolated with problem readers then you'd forget that you have to take them to quite a high standard. So as long as you keep in touch with good readers then I can't see that that's a problem (not being on a class fulltime).

If a classroom teacher is selected it is recommended that the release for the teacher be consistent.

> Giving your teacher , if she's a fulltime classroom teacher, no duties, no extra work whatsoever. Getting the teacher who comes in (to release the Reading Recovery teacher) to take far more planning and be far more reliable and be a real team .

RECOMMENDATION 8

Schools commencing Reading Recovery need to ensure that there is a quiet teaching space available permanently during the year and that adequate book resources are allocated.

Establishing the Reading Recovery program in a school requires resources as emphasised in previous chapters.

> Obviously you need an area to do it in. I think some teachers this year have found it very difficult because they've shared the back of classrooms and all that sort of thing. It's very difficult to concentrate on a Reading Recovery lesson for the teacher when there's something going on, and for the children too. If someone comes to the door they really lose their concentration really quickly. So you really need an area for Reading Recovery that's undisturbed and is very quiet.

Books are the other major resource which the program requires.

> You have to be prepared to buy all the resources because there are teachers who have struggled with very few books and it's . . . . , I don't think it can work properly because the children have a really limited access to books and they're not really experiencing the types of literature that they should be. So you have to be prepared to have the resources to set Reading Recovery up.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Support for the Reading Recovery teacher needs to be provided by the whole school staff particularly during the implementation stage.

The importance of whole school support for the teacher taking on the Reading Recovery responsibilities was stressed by the Reading Recovery teachers. Staff support, sometimes just to the extent of acknowledging the demands of the program,

> (Support) Just from the other staff around. You know some staff just think - she's only the Reading Recovery teacher, she's trained, she's only got four kids. If they knew that you needed their support, you know to say - you're going well with the kids, keep going, I can see that they're improving.

It was also recommended that schools consider and recognise the stress of the Reading Recovery position during the training year.

> I think the school just has to be very understanding that that teacher is going to have a lot of pressure, a lot of strain, a lot of self doubt as

> to whether they can do it. We are constantly in a state of 'I don't know what I'm doing, what's happening, what's going on! I've been teaching for fifteen years and this is all so new, and I can't handle this any longer!' They need to have very understanding bosses.

The recommendations for support were more specific if the Reading Recovery teacher was to be a classroom teacher. The morning session was the recommended time for Reading Recovery lessons.

> I think taking all the pressure off a teacher in their first year of training and just let them get on. Do it in the morning and go back in the classroom for the soft subjects. Don't handle reading (in the classroom), it's just too much for the teacher even though you are supposed to monitor them in their room you can monitor it still.

If at all possible it was suggested that the Reading Recovery teacher be supported by not being allocated any additional duties. In order to gain this level of support for the Reading Recovery teacher the schools recommended that the staff be kept informed about the progress of the program. It was suggested that one of the most effective methods of continuing staff support for the program was to invite as many teachers as possible to observe a Reading Recovery lesson.

> To keep the staff well informed, as much as possible, encouraging them to actually sit in on the lessons. As Rita gained confidence we have used her to take staff sessions, too, and I would strongly advice that because the skills that are learnt in Reading Recovery are wonderful skills that can be learnt at any level and the teachers now are realising that and they are now learning from what Rita is showing them.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the recommendations made by schools who participated in the first year of the Reading Recovery program on the North Coast. The schools acknowledged that any recommendations made were based on the experience of their school. It is clear that all of the recommendations would be difficult to apply in every school. This is not the suggestion. Rather these comments are reported in order to inform schools as fully as possible of the issues they should consider when reviewing the Reading Recovery program and it's suitability for their school population. The decision to adopt the program is not one which should be made in haste.

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Appendix 1

A sample teaching load

The Year One class teachers portray four of the children in the pilot program ; Damien, Barry, Michelle and Ken. They describe the children before they went onto the program and then after they had been discontinued.

Each trainee Reading Recovery teacher worked with four children every day and these portrayals are presented as a sample of four children who could make up their teaching load.

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Barry

At the beginning of the year Barry was not reading at all or attempting to write. This child was at a complete stop and after working with him for the first few weeks of school and coming up to the Reading Recovery program I realised that he was a definite candidate. He had not started to read. During reading or writing classes he was inattentive. He wasn't trying. We do a lot of shared reading and he wasn't reading with us, not participating at all and if I drew him out individually he would flounder, he would cover up, he would be silly, he would be naughty. He was a very, very quiet boy. As I said absolutely no participation in group activities and he basically didn't communicate with me. I had to draw every word out of him. He was very quiet. He would socialise with the other children quite alright but I couldn't develop any type of rapport with him at all. He virtually wasn't attempting to write. He wasn't even doing the very early stages where he would attempt to write the initial sounds and put a space or a line for the rest. He would write a few letters down that could be anything. And he would only verbalise a story under pressure, if you insisted that he have a go. He didn't show any interest in reading or writing at all.

He was interested in school. He enjoyed other aspects of it. He enjoyed play, the social side of being at school. He participated in other curriculum areas, he would do the work that we were doing. He would paint. He would draw. He would do the creative activities we did but not at a very high level, and he was always talking, he was always playing, he was always doing something else and not attending to the task at hand.

Now he's discontinued........
Well, he's a good worker. He's working at a good Year One level, better than my average. He's very proud of his reading and he will take any opportunity to read, in any situation. In group situations, individually. His parents have reported that he reads a lot at home now. He writes confidently and

independently and can do those things without prompting now. His writing has gone back a little bit to where he is only comfortable writing what he knows that he can do well. He's still not a risk taker with his writing but I'm very happy with his progress in class. The basic reader that we do in the class is Eureka and he's reading along with those without any problem and he's also borrowing home readers. We have a selection of home readers - Jelly Bean and Sunshine books and he takes those. His mother's told me that he's gone through his own books and reads those at home now and I've noticed that he borrows regularly from the library as well.

Now when he comes to a part in a book that he can't read he uses all those strategies that he's been practising and he's been taught to use in Reading Recovery. He uses word analyses, he re-reads, he looks for meaning clues and makes sure what he's reading sounds correct. He can detect a word that he doesn't know and he can always hear if he's made an error, and, through him doing those things in a reading group situation, I have more children doing those things as well because they're picking up the strategy from him. It also reflects in my teaching as well because I'm teaching for those kinds of things within the class as well.

Overall, he's a lot more confident. If anything he tends to be a bit more on the naughty side, showing off. I'm not worried about that. I'm sure that will get back to normal. He is keen to work, he is no longer distracted from his work. He can apply himself to the task he's doing and he's much more outgoing. He will now talk to me really readily, if anything, I have to get him to stop talking to give someone else a turn. He'll rattle on and on and on, which is very different from the child I was seeing at the beginning of the year. Fairly early within the program his confidence lifted. He became more outgoing. He was working at my bottom reading group to start with and he very quickly exceeded the abilities of that group and I had to put him up to the next group and he's the only child that I have moved out of that group and I would be tempted to put him in my top reading group because I think he is working quite well with the top of the middle group. The teacher that I shared the class with at the time commented on the improvements that she could see with his other curriculum areas (she did maths, social science). His ability to read and write was coming through into those other subjects.

His mother hasn't been in a lot but if I ever saw her in the street I'd always stop and say something. She's a very quiet lady and I would have to ask her what she felt but she was very pleased. I was speaking to her a few weeks ago and she said that she thought at the moment that he wasn't reading as much at home now that he stopped the program and I asked her to see that he continued to read while he was at home. He reads all his home readers but whether he's read so much and wants a break or what the reason is, I don't know. But I'm still monitoring that and still keeping a close eye on just how he's using his reading outside the school.

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Damien

Well, I had him last year and he was in Kindergarten and he really did nothing all year. His attendance last year at school was really poor and he just had no basic reading skills whatsoever. He really just could not do anything. Oh, he was dreadful during any reading session, he was really terrible. His behaviour was so bad that I used to think it was me. I was at him all the time, constantly, so altogether he just did nothing. He spent all his time being in trouble and doing nothing and he never ever listened and he never ever did anything and if you did teach him something then he wouldn't be at school for the next week so when he came back he would have forgotten everything you had done so there was no support from home so he just had nothing. The only thing he may have been able to do was recognise a few sounds and even that may have been doubtful. He just did nothing all year. Played around. Spent all his time rolling around on the floor and distracting everybody and being in trouble. And he was like that at the beginning of this year, too. Yet he did show an interest in reading and writing. It was almost like an adult who can't read. He used to cover it up. He used to try and hide it but basically I think he really wanted to know how to read and write. I mean, I think they all do when it comes down to it. But he would hide that all the time. When he couldn't do anything he just went into his silly behaviour and he knew he'd be picked up for that or he copied off other kids or if you said to him - where's your homework Damien? He'd say - I've forgotten it. If you asked him to read something it would be - I don't remember. All the excuses that a non reader makes. And with writing, he didn't do anything. He wouldn't even try. Just do a whole heap of letters together just like a first writing experience with a kindergarten child. That's all he'd do. Couldn't tell you what it was, occasionally he would give it meaning but not consistently. Did nothing.

Now that he has discontinued........
Well once he started to go to Reading Recovery his behaviour improved immediately, it was almost like - instant -, he just became so much better. He really wanted to learn to read. It was really uppermost in his mind and I think he's done really well considering that I don't think his parents have been all that supportive. He's also had his parents split up this year. He comes from a really big family where he is just one of the babies. And I think it's probably - 'go outside and play'. There's too many other things happening. You know, the Reading Recovery teacher spoke to the mother about absences and said - could he please come in and just do the Reading Recovery and he didn't even do that. He might stay away for a week or for two or three days and there's never an explanation or a phone call or an attempt to even bring him in. So I think he's done extremely well considering he's had no extra help from home and he's virtually remembered to bring his books on his own. But he's really wanted to learn with vengeance and he's changed, his behaviour has changed. Even his personality. Whereas once whenever you asked him to do something, every time he would say - 'well, I can't do that', or 'my mum said I don't have to do that', that sort of thing. Now he wants to tell stories about the house and everything. He's just completely changed. He's just a much happier, more adjusted little boy. As far as where is in the class now, he's kind of come from

the bottom to being the same as the rest of them. Well, say in the middle. I've got two or three who are really good and the rest are sort of average and I think Damien has come from the bottom to the edge of that better group. I've certainly got some that didn't go to Reading Recovery who he is better than now. And now he reads anything. Anything he can lay his hands on. Whatever's there. He's even into changing his own reader. We've got Sunshine books and Story Box and all those readers and he's just changing them all the time. He doesn't even show me. I just see it on his card that it's going up with books and he's just taking them independently and off he goes, he's fine. In writing, he's going quite well. I mean he's writing sentences which is amazing for him if you could see what he was like at the beginning of the year to what he is up to now. And he's writing sentences and he has a go and he's coming out and he's asking for words so he's coping quite well. He's not up with the better kids with his writing but he's certainly improving all the time.

It's really interesting when he comes to a part in a book that he can't read. I don't know how they approach their reading with Reading Recovery but I see (all three of the Reading Recovery children) come to a word and I think 'I wonder what they're going to do' and you can sort of see them look at it and you see them think something and then they'll know the word and whatever it is that they're doing and it's not just sounding, there's more than just sounding there, I know that. They put it into practice and out spurts the word. It's really quite strange, it's interesting. You can see Damien go into this Reading Recovery mode and then he spurts out the word. Anything that's really hard he'll come and ask and I'll say to him - have you had a go at it? And I know from when I went to the day's Reading Recovery they're not encouraged to simply sound it and I say to them - have you tried everything that the Reading Recovery teacher has taught you and - 'yes, yes, I've tried everything' and then after a while I'll finally tell him. But they obviously transfer it from Reading Recovery into the classroom and into other situations. Damien does anyway.

Overall, I think his interest in learning has improved a thousand percent, his behaviour has improved unbelievably. He's self confident and I think that's most probably the most important thing, he really likes himself. Before, I don't think he really liked himself very much so it didn't matter if he was a pain in the neck and upset everybody. But now he actually likes himself and you know he's just more confident with everything he does. He's happy to do his formal work, he tries hard. It's really just like a whole personality change in Damien. He's just a much happier little boy and it's the same with the three of them, coping much better with everything and even actually, and even making friends. Kids are playing with him now whereas once he only played with naughty kids because they were the only ones that would and it wasn't really that they liked each other it was that they fed off each other but now he's playing with everybody. It's really hard for me to sit here and tell you what he was like because if you didn't know him you couldn't believe it.

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Michelle

I guess Michelle was a very slow learner and she didn't seem to take off at the beginning of the year. Or she didn't seem to be with us when we were actually teaching reading lessons and she found it very difficult to stay with even the lower group in the class. So I think that was the major reason why we recommended that she be taken on the program. She had poor reading skills. I think her letter recognition was very poor. Certainly, trying to recognise words and taking words out of context were very difficult for her. Fluency in even basic reading was very difficult. She had great difficulty in getting thoughts down onto paper. What went down on paper was, well only she could understand it, and even then it was only a few words at a time, so it was poor. I think at that time there may not have been a lot of interest in reading and writing, it may just have been a lot of work. Something that she wasn't all that interested in learning because I suppose she couldn't do it, so the interest level wasn't there but I think it was basically due to the fact that she couldn't do it and she just basically wasn't catching on. It was really a task. Her behaviour really wasn't a problem. Well, she is a very quiet little girl so I don't think there was a real problem there. I think she more or less sat on the outer and was happy to be on the outer simply because she couldn't join in with the kids. So, there wasn't any disruption as such but she certainly wasn't learning or wasn't involved in the learning process as well as she could have been

Now that she has discontinued......
I think one of the most obvious results of it is that she's just so much more confident. She'll now sit down and have a go at things. There's a happiness there too. You can be confident I suppose but there's a little bit more with Michelle. She's happy to do it. She's happy to have a go and she is having a go and she is achieving. So she's settled back well into the class and she's prepared to have a go now whereas earlier on she was just happy to withdraw and stay in the background. Even though I don't think it really worried her earlier on in the year. She's that kind of child, she's very, she just lets things roll. But now that she realises she can get into the reading and certainly can get into the writing there's a confidence and happiness there that wasn't there earlier on. I'd still place her below the average in the class but she's certainly made quite a lot of progress. She can participate and she can get a lot of the reading done that we're doing in the classroom but I think I still would place her below the average. I think that a lot of other children in the class have made progress too, so even though she's made leaps and bounds she still had so far to catch up and she has made up a lot of ground which is quite evident but I feel too that a lot of other kids too in the class have in fact progressed. Whether she will in the long term catch up. I think she will, but still I think the other children in the mainstream of the class, in that middle group are still making a lot of progress too, so she's made a lot of ground but I still wouldn't quite put her there. Maybe towards the middle of the year or possibly even next year.

She's prepared to have a go at writing now. I do a lot of modelling in the classroom and they write from the modelling and she will in fact have a go at that. Her handwriting, her actual letter formation is really good now. She's made a lot of progress with that and I think that goes hand in hand with the conference writing and just being able to sit down and write. With what she is actually seeing is legible writing. She's happy with what it looks like. I think that shows that she's prepared to put down her thoughts and make sure it's understandable. I think that's the difference. I'm not quite sure what she does really when see comes to a part in a book she can't read but she works pretty hard at trying to get the word whereas earlier on she would have just let it be and not made any attempt at all. So she's obviously developed a few skills there. She points, all of the children point most of the time. But yeah, I think she does now in fact make an effort. She's got things moving in her brain. She has got ideas that she can tackle words with, whereas earlier on she wouldn't have had the ideas and I think that was why she was out of the reading process. She's not in my bottom group now. I have five groups in my classroom. She'd be in the third or fourth group. The bottom group, that's where she would have been at the beginning of the year whereas she's now progressed out of that whereas I've had other kids from that bottom groups that are marking time, maybe with the difficulties that she had earlier on in the year. So, she's made that progress. She's moving up in the class. She's really interested in books. I know that the Reading Recovery Teacher gave her a lot of books. We've also got a home reading scheme going in the classroom so she does in fact enjoy to grab readers and take them home with her twice a week. There is an interest there but I think that comes from the fact that she can see that she can handle books and she is in fact reading.

There's no real behaviour problem. I guess in some instance she is a little bit inattentive but I think that's just par for a class of six year old kids. Some time during the day they're just not with you, so there's no real problem within the class. She knows what she has to do and she's much more independent too with certain activities during the day. On different days, like yesterday we did a sequencing activity and she will just go to it now rather than wait for instructions or be unsure of what to do. So I suppose that's a confidence thing too. Overall, I'd say it's very pleasing to see that she has in fact made some progress and I think the thing that is evident is that she knows she's made it herself. I guess that comes back to the confidence thing too. She knows that she can do it and she's prepared then to have a go and strive to get into the reading process.

The parents have been very happy and very supportive too. Her mum's been in to watch a few lessons with the Reading Recovery Teacher and is regularly at the school checking readers and talking to the Reading Recovery Teacher. I think it would be true to say her mum is more or less over the moon about the attention that Michelle's received and also she's noticed the great progress and the great confidence that Michelle now has.

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Ken

Ken was in kindergarten last year and the last two terms of it he came down very ill. For the last two terms of the year he virtually spent all his time in the hospital and so he got very little education and what he did get was when he was very sick. His co-ordination was very poor. He hadn't spent that time with the children so his socialisation was poor and his reading and writing skills, all those sorts of skills were very poor as well because of the time that he'd missed out. So when he came to me in March, the Year One's that came up were at an acceptable standard but Ken was obviously just lagging behind. He was unable to write even the most basic words. When he did go to write his letters were very wobbly and very unformed. He had difficulty speaking and getting his words out. In all important areas he was just very behind and very uncoordinated so he just needed some extra help somewhere.

(At the beginning of the year) before he went onto the program we started him on a basic book that had about three words to a page and there were about four pages. You were lucky if you could get him through that book. He would take that book home, say five nights a week and he'd read it to mum and by the end of the week he would probably know that book but that was after repeated attempts, so he was doing very simple books like that. You know - 'Sam sat on mat', and 'Dot had a cot',. Just very repetitive word families. He's a very quiet child but because he couldn't do the work he would find other things to do so in some ways he was also disruptive to the children around him but not in any major degree. He would just sit there and stare at it. He would try. He really did try, he was a good little kid but he just wasn't able to do it at that stage. So as much as he tried he was getting very frustrated because he was unable to do as much as the other children around him.

Now that he's discontinued.......
Well he's a happy confident little fellow now. Unfortunately he's a chatter box ,but no, he's really good. At the beginning of the year he could barely write two or three words but now he will do quite happily half a page of writing. The writing is still not absolutely terrific, his words are all together and it's very pushed together but it is a page full of writing. His letters are formed pretty well. He's developed a long way in his writing also the ideas that he's using, they're very advanced compared to the very simple concepts that he used at the beginning of the year. He's also picked up quite a few good ideas that he uses when he is going to work, such as word families, he knows that if he can spell one word just to sound through the other words that he needs to spell. Also from the Reading Recovery program he does know words like 'have' and 'come' and 'because' and some of those words. They came out of the program and he can remember them and use them a great deal. More often than not he will tend to repeat sentences day after day such as 'I have gone to the shop', or 'I have gone home' or 'I have gone to the beach' because he knows - 'I have gone' but he's been able to put that together now in a lot better manner. His reading is much better as well. He's reading at probably at the same level as some of my grade 1's or above which is great. He's a bit above average in his reading skills because he can break down a lot more than the other children can, the meanings of the words, finding context clues and things like that just

by looking at the picture and things like that and he's much better at them than some of the other Year One's.

(When he comes to a word he can't read he'll do one of two things). If he's read it before he'll go back to see where it's been, if he didn't know it then and nobody gave him the word then he'll look at the sentence where it is, he'll try and work it out from the sentence. He'll look at the picture and see if he can find it out from the picture. Then he'll see if he can find some little words in it and if he can't find any little words in it he'll use the last thing which is sounding it out, which is great that the sounding out is the last bid.

He's much happier to do reading and writing now. When he was on the program he was very, very keen to go to Reading Recovery and to do it. And now that he's come off he's kept up that willingness to learn so he really is flying ahead. He does his writing now whenever he can, he really enjoys that and his reading. He's still prone to distractions but then he's just that type of a little boy, but he's very helpful to the other children too in a way because he knows now some of those words so he likes to help the other children do it which is great. He's much more confident so he sits down more willingly to do his writing. He will concentrate a lot more than say some of the other children who say 'oh, it's writing again...boring', whereas Ken will sit and try and get it done because it's something that he's still getting used to. It's fun that he can do that much plus he gets so many good stickers at the end of it too.

His mother has been very pleased. She was very worried at the beginning of the year about his progress. So she was keeping a constant check on him through the whole program and now that he's come off she's thrilled that he's come off and that he's back in the mainstream of the class and not being taken off any more and she's just pleased with the fact that he has caught up and that he is in some ways a little bit more advanced than the others. So that was terrific. He's very willing now to go home and do writing at home whereas before he wasn't willing to do it because he couldn't do it. He's quite happy to do stories at home with his mum. He's always enjoyed reading but it was more his mum reading to him or him sitting there being frustrated trying to get through a story but now he just flies through the story. He's very interested and he'll spend quite a lot of time on a page looking at the words, looking at the picture, discussing, not just what the words are saying, but the things in the picture and the abstract thoughts that he has on it as well. So she's been really impressed with it. It's been good.

The Reading Recovery teacher said that he was probably her best pupil to this stage because he was so willing to learn and he did so well. She took him off at stage eighteen I think, which is a little bit above what they were supposed to come off but he was just flying ahead so she let him go. I'm pleased with his progress. The other Year One teacher, Faye, is pleased with it as well because she's just seen the results of that program so it's been good. She's had one child come off in her classroom, too. Ken has just been a spur to those two children because as soon as they heard that Ken was coming off - 'oh, we had better push ourselves a bit so we can come off too'. It's sort of affected everybody.

I know my time allocation with him has gone down. I wouldn't say a great deal but it has gone down compared to what it was at the beginning. He couldn't read anything so you would have to explain it sentence by sentence. His co-ordination was so poor that you'd have to wait ages just to get the most basic thing out of him, you know, a basic word. Now he can read through a worksheet by himself and more often than not he'll complete it by himself, he doesn't need any help which if good. Every week we have three spelling sheets doing work on word families and before he and the three others (in Reading Recovery) would find it a battle just to get it finished in an hour and a half. Now he will get it finished in half an hour to an hour by himself, too.

Overall, I think the Reading Recovery program has helped him in all areas. It's not just his academic levels such as his reading and writing which were the obvious things to have improved but his coordination is much better too. He's always a very pale, sick looking boy because of his illness last year but because he's much more confident now in his writing because of the program he's much more flexible and we've also done a lot of PE and things like that. So he's much more coordinated than he used to be which is reflected in his writing. He's a lot more confident. Very confident. He's now very willing to try and do things by himself and not be lost and be unhappy about it and he doesn't get as frustrated as he used to.